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ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Research & Practice (ECRP), a peer-reviewed, Internet-only journal sponsored by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE), covers topics related to the development, care, and education of children from birth to approximately age 8. ECRP emphasizes articles reporting on practice-related research and on issues related to practice, parent participation, and policy. ECRP also includes articles and essays that present opinions and reflections. This issue of ECRP contains the following major articles: (1) "Instant Video Revisiting: The Video Camera as a 'Tool of the Mind' for Young Children" (George Forman); (2) "The Role of Religious Beliefs in Early Childhood Education: Christian and Buddhist Preschools in Japan" (Susan Holloway); (3) "What Should Children Learn? Making Choices and Taking Chances" (Rebecca New); (4) "A Comparison of the National Preschool Curricula in Norway and Sweden" (Marit Alvestad and Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson); (5) "Public Factors That Contribute to School Readiness" (Diane Edwards); and (6) "The School Bus Project" (Ruth Harkema). The issue concludes with an ERIC database search on international perspectives on early childhood education and a description of new ERIC/EECE publications and activities, along with general information and links related to the journal. (LPP)

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ECRP
EARLY CHILDHOOD RESEARCH & PRACTICE

an Internet journal on the development, care, and education of young children

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Volume 1, Number 2

Instant Video Revisiting: The Video Camera as a "Tool of the Mind" for Young Children

George Forman

Abstract

Once used only to record special events in the classroom, video cameras are now small enough and affordable enough to be used to document everyday events. Video cameras with foldout screens allow children to watch their activities immediately after they happen and to discuss them with a teacher. This article coins the term instant video revisiting (IVR) to describe this process and, using classroom video clips, explores the educational value of IVR.

A Modern Tool of the Mind

Educators have been quick to use the educational benefits of new technology—from the pencil to chalk, overhead projectors, audio recorders, and now video players and cameras. Yet the video camera has been underutilized in everyday classroom instruction and has been reserved for documenting only special events or field trips. The video camera could be treated as a memory machine that would yield a fairly replete and honest record of everyday events. Used in this way, the video camera could become a modern "tool of the mind," a staple in the classroom. Perhaps the cameras have been too expensive and too large in the past, but both of these factors have changed in the past few years. So it is timely to present, in this article, a set of research questions about the educational value of a special type of video camera—the 8mm video camera with a foldout screen that allows children to watch their activities immediately after they happen. This immediate revisiting differs from revisiting a videotape some hours or days later in a context that is different from the original experience; therefore, this article coins the phrase "instant video revisiting" or IVR. In IVR, the revisiting is done in the same place and context that is displayed in the episode on the tape.

What Is the Video Image?

In the following short video clip of Rubin, he is playing with a toy fish in the water table. The clip begins with my showing him an instant replay of the tape on the tiny screen. He sees himself and refers to himself by his own name. Notice two things. First, Rubin refers to his own image as "It's Rubin" using a third-person point of reference. Second, notice that Rubin tells the *story* of the big whale eating the fish. He does not simply tell me what he is physically doing, such as "Rubin make the fish splash."

Download the free Quicktime Player.
View a Quick Time Movie of Rubin.
Read the transcript.
See both.

Clearly, Rubin was interested in this image of himself. This tiny screen presents a compelling stimulus. But what is this image to a young child? Why do so many young children refer to their image in the third person or in other ways that suggest the image is "sort of me" but "sort of something else?" The following two clips of Peter and Autumn broaden this question.

Peter speaks no English, but the video camera definitely engages his mind. Watch him scratch his face when he sees a video replay of himself scratching his face a few minutes earlier. He repeats this behavior on four consecutive viewings. What provokes this child to scratch his own face when he sees himself scratching his face in the video? Does he seek to confirm that this image is truly himself?

View a Quick Time Movie of Peter.

In what time frame does the video live for the young child—the present or the past? Listen to Autumn react to how "funny" it is to see her own hand on the screen, yet have her real hands on her knees. I first videotape her hand live on the camera and ask her to wiggle her fingers so that she can "feel" the contemporaneity between the moving image and her moving hand. Then I rewind (not shown) and let her watch her moving hand when her real hands are resting on her knees. She clearly is engaged by this asynchrony, which suggests that at 3 years she understands that this image is both her and not her.

View a Quick Time Movie of Autumn.
Read the transcript.
See both.

A Shift toward Meaning and Intention of Action

Now let's return to Rubin—who tells me about the whale. Is this frame of mind toward the experience unusual and less likely to happen without IVR?

View a Quick Time Movie of Rubin.
Read the transcript.
See both.

Rubin looks at the action in the video and tells me what it means, not just what it is. He does not say, "I

am playing with the fish" or "I made a big splash." He is telling me about the purpose and intention of the actors in his story. I propose that he would not have made this shift from the physical actions to motivated intentions without instant video replay. The video camera, as a "tool of the mind" allows Rubin to "download" the details of actions to the videotape. The video replays the physical detail. His mind is now free to think about what the actions mean.

..

A Tool of the Mind for the Teacher

This "tool of the mind" also affects how a teacher observes the children. When I was walking through the classroom, I made decisions about what to film. I did not realize explicitly why some episodes were better candidates than others, but now I think I know. I was looking for instances where children were doing something I could ask them about, some little bit of cleverness that they had performed of which they might not be aware. I wanted to use the camera to bring into their consciousness the children's own high-level thinking in ordinary moments. The following clips provide a few examples.

In the next clip, I find a reason to ask Derrick why he is being so careful in the way he moved his truck. He was playing with a toy truck made of Lego-like elements. The toy would come apart if it fell from the platform on which Derrick was playing. Derrick wanted to move the truck to the floor where he had more space, but he did not want to step outside the "pretend frame" by just lifting the truck through the air. So he drives the truck over the cliff very carefully. I figure he was thinking about something, so I capture his play on videotape and then revisit the tape with him a few minutes later. Note how he gives his reason for the behavior, as opposed to simply describing his behavior: "Because I didn't want to break it."

View a Quick Time Movie of Derrick.
Read the transcript.
See both.

It is interesting that I found an opportunity to use IVR with Autumn, age 3, to ask the same question when she was being very careful in placing some small toy horses so they would not fall over. She was placing them quite near each other and had to slow her actions so her hand would not bump a previously placed toy horse. I ask her, "I noticed you were placing those horses very carefully. Why were you being so careful?" She draws a breath and says, "Because I was being so careful." Undiscouraged by her circular answer, I rephrase my question. "Yes, I know you were being very careful, but what were you trying to do." She gives a second draw of breath and says with confidence, "I was trying to be very careful." Through the use of IVR, I was able to learn that this "why" question was a bit beyond Autumn's understanding. And since I had presented her with the video replay of just where and when she was being very careful, as a researcher I had more confidence that she knew what I was talking about. Her problem was not in retrieving from memory the correct referent (a semantic issue), but rather her problem was in her inability to muster a reframing of that referent into its intentionality or purpose (a pragmatic issue).

Let's continue with this idea that the video camera has an affordance (e.g., capturing memories) that once adopted by the teacher creates an attitude of mind about what to observe in the classroom and what is worthy of revisiting. My camera finds Joanna solving a problem with paper that has no support under it—a little moment, but a clever one.

View a Quick Time Movie of Joanna.

Read the transcript.
See both.

In like measure, I was excited when my camera caught Lisa solving a problem by using her mouth as a third hand. She wanted to tape the two ends of a folded piece of paper to make an envelope for her daily message to a friend. There is no sound on this clip. I knew that after this footage was filmed, I would ask her why she was using her mouth.

View a Quick Time Movie of Lisa.

Several minutes after this clip was made, I do ask Lisa why she was using her mouth. She tells me straight off, "I want to tape the ends together and if I did not hold it [in my mouth], it would fall down." At age 4½, she is well on her way toward making her plans and purposes explicit through an articulate use of words.

The video camera, because it affords a more reflective attitude toward an experience, caused me to be alert for those moments in the classroom where children were being purposive.

The children themselves gradually made a shift from telling me about their product to telling me about their process. Lisa began to say, "I am putting the tape here so the paper will not open." Without the video review, she might more likely say, "I am making an envelope."

Although the focus on process with the videotape may sound obvious and ordinary, the point is that children seldom talk this way about their experience. For many reasons, including Piaget's theory of equilibration and his emphasis on procedural knowledge and transformations between states, this type of talk should be supported.

What Is Interesting

Children would see me approach with my camera. Their knowledge that I was recording gave the children a reason to consider what in the classroom or what in their own play was interesting. It turns out that thinking about what is interesting requires rather high-level thinking.

The next clip begins with my revisiting a videotape with Derrick who had been playing in a rather random and distracted way with his fire truck. I knew from earlier observations of Derrick that he had great fantasy in his play and great curiosity about how things work. But for some reason, at the time I was videotaping him, he was waiting for an idea. So I say to Derrick, "Could you show me something interesting." He does not know this word, so I continue, "Could you show me something special or different about your truck." He looks at the camera and shows me how the ladder on his truck uncoils. He had made this ladder himself from the connectable modular pieces in a construction set.

View a Quick Time Movie of Derrick.
Read the transcript.
See both.

In the next clip, we see Charlie pointing to a fishnet. He points voluntarily without my asking him to show me anything. Charlie is rather media savvy and wants me to get something special on my videotape. He remembers that recently, when making their loft into a pretend boat, this fishnet was hung

by the children and teachers as an enhancement of the nautical theme the children had chosen. Charlie equates interesting with what's new. He thinks something is interesting because it was not there before, therefore it is "news." And as you hear in my revisiting with Charlie, he wanted me to get a picture of this fishnet so we all could see it "on the big screen." His mind anticipates the viewing as he guides me through the classroom.

View a Quick Time Movie of Charlie.
Read the transcript.
See both.

The camera, because it records an experience, gives the child a reason to scan the aspects of an experience for highlights, for news. This process of reflecting on the aspects of an experience, in search of "the news," is a nontrivial, challenging, and useful endeavor. Finding the news is selective, meta-cognitive, and collaborative in focus.

The Video as Evidence

On several occasions, it seemed that children were relying too heavily on the video image. For example, there was one case where a group of boys got into a slight tussle for possession of a wooden spoon. The videotape displayed this tussle of the three boys as well as the sound of a child crying. The crying came from off camera, not from any of the three boys. In the video clip, Charlie wipes his eyes as he leaves the loft, but Charlie never cried during the tussle over the spoon.

During the revisiting of this tape, the boys each thought the crying was one of the other two boys. One boy, Charlie, even said that he had tears, just a little, but he was crying for his friends. This little episode alerted me to the possibility that the videotape, once understood as a record of a past experience, takes on a dominance that is not warranted. Occasionally, children will reinterpret their own memory when confronted with ambiguous information from a videotape.

View a Quick Time Movie of the tussle.
Read the transcript.
See both.

Taking Another Child's Perspective

This final clip portrays Nickolas, age 4, taking a sifting pan from Hayden, age 4½. After Hayden chases Nickolas around the room, a teacher intervenes and negotiates the return of the pan to Hayden. Immediately thereupon, I ask both children to watch this episode with me on the video camera. I have watched this clip many times, and now I ask you to watch it to see if Nickolas has any sense of morality about the inconvenience and frustration he was causing Hayden. It seems to me that Nickolas was eager to see the video (notice him laugh at his image and proudly tell me "My name is Nickolas"). He had, in his own mind, been neutral toward the encounter with Hayden, as if he had been playing a game in which Hayden was a willing and joyful participant. The obvious question arises, to wit, can IVR help children reframe their behavior from the perspective of the other child, a type of meta-perspective if you will, thinking about someone else's thinking? I've called the clip "The Case of the Stolen Pan."

View a Quick Time Movie of "The Case of the Stolen Pan."
Read the transcript.
See both.

The freeze frame at the end, with Nickolas bowing his head, might indicate his feelings of contrition. The pose did not last as long as the freeze frame, so one is not sure. The pose does cause one to reflect and ask if the revisiting had shamed Nickolas, which was not my intention when I asked them to look at the episode. I had hoped to make the revisiting a problem-solving session about what could be done differently. But, understandably so, Hayden was eager to return to the sandbox with her newly reclaimed pan and continue to search for jewels. In this case, the immediacy of the revisiting worked against its effectiveness.

Conclusion

In summary, the following questions can serve to guide future work with IVR:

1. Does IVR increase reflective thinking, helping children to step outside of an experience?
2. Does IVR increase thinking about the process and goals of actions, rather than thinking only about the physical details of an action?
3. Does IVR increase the meta-cognitive by making it possible to query a child about his or her own thinking while engaged in an activity of play or work?
4. Does IVR work in these ways because the replayed videotape, in essence, "downloads" the physical details of an experience and allows the child more "operating memory" space to think about purpose, goals, intentions, and strategies that give the action meaning?
5. Does IVR serve as a "tool of the mind" where the diminutive screen causes children to focus more carefully on the details of their play or to focus more carefully on the global form of their play?
6. Is an essential part of IVR the fact that the revisiting is done "in situ" where, as children revisit, they can touch and refer to the same places and objects that are presented in the video?
7. How best can we adapt IVR to have it serve our objectives of helping children form strong social relations with each other as they discuss their ideas in small groups?
8. What are the developmental milestones that we should know as we use IVR with children of different ages?
9. How does use of the 8mm camera frame the classroom experience for the teacher and frame the teacher's view of his or her role as researcher?
10. What are the inherent efficiencies in having IVR video footage for use in the documentation of the children's learning for study by parents and professionals?

I invite readers to use this technology with care and sensitivity and to find ways to integrate it into small group play and to give more control of the use of this little camera to the children themselves.

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Volume 1, Number 2

The Role of Religious Beliefs in Early Childhood Education: Christian and Buddhist Preschools in Japan

Susan D. Holloway

Abstract

The views of teachers and directors in four Christian preschools and four Buddhist preschools are examined in this qualitative study of early childhood education in Japan. In Christian preschools, the guiding principle was that each child was a precious gift of God. This belief resulted in a play-oriented curriculum that maximized the choices available to children. Teachers also attempted to encourage children's creativity and their ability to formulate thoughts and express them to others. A particular focus was helping children appreciate each other as individuals and learn to form relationships based upon that appreciation. In Buddhist preschools, the curriculum was designed to strengthen children's virtue, intellect, and physical well-being. Activities were teacher structured, with an emphasis on attaining literacy and numeracy skills. Lessons were delivered in a whole group context, with an emphasis on absorbing content rather than encouraging personal exploration and expression. The clear implications of these different religious perspectives suggest that similar analyses be undertaken in the United States, where very little research has been conducted on church-based preschools.

Introduction

The United States is one of the most religious countries in the world, with a majority of the population claiming affiliation with a religious group. After a historical period of relatively strict separation between church and state, religious values are again beginning to receive explicit recognition in some public educational settings. For example, Congress recently voted to allow the Ten Commandments to be posted in public school classrooms. Additionally, many states are debating whether to allocate public funds to charter schools sponsored by religious organizations, another breach in the wall of separation (Fuller, in press).

In the research literature on K-12 schooling, there has been a growing scrutiny of religious schools. One focus has been on the manner in which the values inherent in the religious doctrine are embodied in the expectations for teachers, students, and parents, including such issues as student comportment in and

out of school, teachers' discipline practices, and the nature of teachers' communication with parents. Research in Catholic schools suggests that children benefit when parents and staff communicate with each other and share such values as commitment to hard work and respectful behavior toward adults (e.g., Bauch, 1993; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). The literature on home schooling has also begun to track the role of religious values in shaping curriculum and pedagogical practices (Huerta, in press).

In contrast to this burgeoning literature in the K-12 area, there has been little attention to the functioning of early childhood programs that operate under religious auspices. A few studies of child care quality have included religious affiliation as a variable, and so far the findings have been rather contradictory. In the National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989), for example, researchers found that church-sponsored centers paid higher wages than for-profit centers, but they lagged behind nonreligious, nonprofit centers in the provision of other employee benefits. On the other hand, analysis of a national survey of nearly 2,000 centers found that employee salaries were lower in church-related centers than in any other type, and the analysis also found less evidence of a planned curriculum and parent participation in church-related centers than in any other type (Fuller, Raudenbush, Wei, & Holloway, 1993).

Work to date has not closely investigated the goals and expectations of staff at church-based schools, nor have studies assessed aspects of children's learning and development that may be most relevant to the goals of the schools. More research, particularly in the form of qualitative investigations, is needed to better understand the ways in which the "rules for living" espoused within various religious organizations are instantiated in preschool organizations.

In the study reported here, a qualitative approach was utilized to understand the goals, values, and expectations of Japanese early childhood education programs affiliated with Christianity and Buddhism. By talking at length with teachers and directors of these programs, I sought to understand how their values were embodied in the practices and curricula of the schools. These data underscore the importance of understanding how collectively held belief systems inform educational practice.

The system of early childhood education in Japan is quite extensive. Over 90% of Japanese children attend at least 2 years of a licensed preschool (*youchien*) or child care center (*hoikuen*) (Boocock, 1989). Public preschools are funded by state and local government (with some tuition contributed by parents), but approximately 80% of children attend private preschools, some of which are affiliated with a religious organization (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 1994). All preschools and child care centers are subject to oversight by the national government, which develops regulations pertaining to such issues as the dimensions and basic facilities available and the level of required teacher preparation. However, preschool directors have considerable latitude in formulating their own programs, resulting in more diversity in the areas of materials, activities, and curriculum than is seen at any other stage in the Japanese educational system (Peak, 1991; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989). Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity, which have been intertwined with each other for over a century in Japan, create a rich tapestry of spiritual and philosophical thought that has had a profound impact on the nature of preschools (Wollons, 1993). (Note 1)

The theoretical basis of this study is located in the literature at the intersection of anthropology and psychology (Shweder et al., 1998). In this literature, individuals involved in the socialization and education of young children are presumed to hold cultural models that guide their actions (e.g., Harkness & Super, 1995). Cultural models are "presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in it . . . [and which] frame experience, supplying interpretations of that experience and inferences about it, and

[provide] goals for action" (Quinn & Holland, 1987, p. 10). Cultural models include beliefs or conceptual schemas (e.g., "children should be seen and not heard") as well as behavioral scripts (e.g., steps to take when a child acts in an aggressive manner toward a peer) (D'Andrade, 1992; Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). However, cultural models are not necessarily associated with broad social categories like nation or ethnicity (Kondo, 1990); they can be generated within smaller social units as well (e.g., working class families in the Shitamachi section of Tokyo). Furthermore, for important topics like rearing and educating children, a number of cultural models are available in a given community. This cultural "pool" of beliefs and practices may contain elements that are in tension, or even in fundamental conflict, with each other (Kojima, 1986, 1988). Within Japanese preschools affiliated with religious organizations, there may therefore be sharply divergent models as to how human relations should be organized and socialized in young children (see also Shore, 1996; Holloway, Fuller, Rambaud, & Eggers-Piérola, 1997).

Sample and Methods

The data are drawn from interviews and observations conducted in 1994 and 1995 in 32 early childhood settings (27 preschools, 5 child care centers) in Tokyo and the Kansai area, which includes the major cities of Osaka and Kobe. Introductions to site directors were provided by officials in the regional association of private preschools and by colleagues in local universities. (Note 2) The sample was selected to ensure variation across type (preschool, child care center), location (urban, suburban), and auspice (private, public).

The visit to each setting included an observation of approximately 1 hour in a classroom serving 4-year-olds and an interview with the director and one or more teachers, conducted by the author and a Japanese bilingual associate. (Note 3) The open-ended interview, which lasted from 1 to 3 hours, was designed to probe cultural models regarding goals of the preschool experience, theories about the role of the teacher in facilitating learning, views about discipline and control, details of the curriculum and activities, and perceptions about the family and its relationship with early childhood education. The observations were used as a source of examples to deepen these extended conversations. All interviews were tape recorded; in addition, detailed notes were kept during the interview.

Subsequent to the first round of data collection, a deductive process of preliminary data analysis occurred. Field notes and interview notes were reviewed and analyzed using a preliminary coding framework. Initial data displays were developed—within-case displays were created to highlight the key cultural models in each preschool, and cross-case displays were used to highlight differences and similarities across preschools (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the second round of data collection, 3 schools were selected from the pool of 27 preschools. The author and a Japanese associate spent at least 5 days in each setting, observing in a classroom of 4-year-olds and conducting further interviews with staff. A running record was kept during the observations, with the focus being a description of the teacher's activities and utterances. Field and interview notes were reviewed regularly to develop hypotheses that could be probed in subsequent interviews and observations (Strauss, 1987).

At the end of the data collection period, all interviews were translated and transcribed by a bilingual Japanese doctoral student in education. The original Japanese terms used for key childrearing and educational concepts were retained along with the translated equivalents. A coding system was developed that permitted sections of narrative to be tagged with global categories (e.g., goals, activities, teacher-child relations, discipline, role of the parent, and issues of individualism and group orientation). The transcriptions were then coded using a qualitative software package.

The final stage of analysis involved a number of activities. First, all passages associated with each of the key codes were examined to obtain a sense of the variation that existed within each code. Next, the entire corpus of transcripts and field notes was reviewed to learn how the categories fit together at each school. A matrix was generated listing the central findings pertaining to each category for each preschool. These steps resulted in the confirmation of earlier hypotheses about the clusters of cultural models that were shared by subgroups of the preschool staff. Brief case studies of particular schools were written to use as a point of discussion in focus groups and informal interviews with Japanese informants—including parents, parent educators, and faculty in departments of psychology and early childhood education. Reactions and commentary from these informants as well as field notes and written material provided by the preschools (i.e., curriculum guides, parent newsletters, and promotional materials) were used to understand and contextualize the interview data. This paper is built primarily upon the comments of directors and teachers from four Buddhist preschools and four Christian preschools (Catholic and Presbyterian).

Findings

Christian Preschools

Directors in each type of school articulated cultural models that guided their school's curriculum and vision of appropriate practice. We begin this discussion with the Christian schools. Although these schools spanned a variety of denominations, both Catholic and Protestant, they shared a number of cultural models that informed their programs. The amount of time devoted specifically to learning about Christianity varied among the schools. Most schools included a daily morning prayer and a prayer before and after meals. Attending a church service of some kind once a week was common. In the more actively religious schools, there was a designated time for listening to Bible stories. At Christmas, they engaged in a number of activities; for example, literature samples obtained from two Catholic preschools each feature a photograph of the Christmas performance, which was an enactment of the Nativity. Although the schools spanned a variety of denominations, including Catholic and Protestant organizations, the staff held a number of cultural models in common.

The Christian directors built their programs around the view that God's love is the primary message of Christianity. According to this central cultural model, children are gifts from God, and each one should therefore be highly appreciated (*hitori hitori o taisetsu ni*). For example, Ms. Watanabe, director of Hikari preschool, expressed the following sentiment:

> *Jesus Christ delivered God's message of love. The love of God means that God loves each individual child. Each individual child is precious because he or she is a gift sent by God. Through his or her parents, each individual child is delivered by God. We sincerely appreciate God's production of children.*

Children at a Christian preschool practice a song for an upcoming performance.

This cultural model had two direct implications for the daily routine at Christian preschools. One way of respecting the individual was to allow the children considerable freedom in deciding what they wanted to do. Accordingly, free play formed the basis of the curriculum in all the Christian schools. For instance, as he came to realize the fundamental importance of individual self-determination in Western religious thought, Mr. Kobayashi, director of Arima preschool, became more and more convinced that it was essential to avoid teacher-centered activities:

> *We respect children's spontaneous activity (*jihatsuteki koudou*). In the past, the children went to the chapel once a week to pray. They had to walk with their hands folded. It was teacher centered, and the adults ordered the children around. The children tried to respond properly. I tried to destroy that atmosphere. I didn't like it because . . . the teacher's desire was different from the desires of the children. If the children aren't paying attention during a story, it means it is not interesting to them—and the teacher shouldn't just tell them to be quiet.*

A second implication was that the teachers placed a priority on encouraging children to articulate their own ideas and to integrate their views with those of their classmates. For example, the teachers at Arima held a class discussion after every art period to elicit children's opinions and ideas about the morning's activities. I observed Ms. Nagatomi, a teacher from Arima, handle such a class meeting for the purpose of discussing a "junk art" project in which children used tape and glue to create individual objects from household items like egg cartons and tissue paper boxes. The projects were imaginative and intricate: a peacock whose tail could stand up when pulled with an attached string; a cardboard jewelry box with tissue paper cut into small squares and pasted to resemble stained glass; a serving of assorted sushi, complete with rosette of ginger and a wedge of plastic grass. Ms. Nagatomi picked up each project and asked its creator to say something about it. She then built on the child's comment, sometimes soliciting suggestions from the class as to how the project could be extended or how problems the creator had experienced could be solved. This carefully conducted discussion is consistent with the Arima philosophy of combining individual attention with developing an awareness of others and skills in interacting with them. As this glimpse indicates, the teachers were careful to nurture the children's imagination and self-expression, both artistic and verbal. But Ms. Nagatomi was careful to balance this focus on the individual with attention to how the children interacted in the group context.

> *Three-year-olds just tend to put a couple of boxes side by side and say, "That's it." . . . But only they themselves know what they are making. Then they realize that others may see*

> *their creations differently. They realize the importance of how the other party sees their productions. Through the creation of a work, they learn to develop a common understanding (*kyoutsuu rikai*). This is my goal. . . . Instead of one child learning a particular subject, we try to involve all the children in the shared learning.*

Children use tape during a "junk art" activity at a Christian preschool.

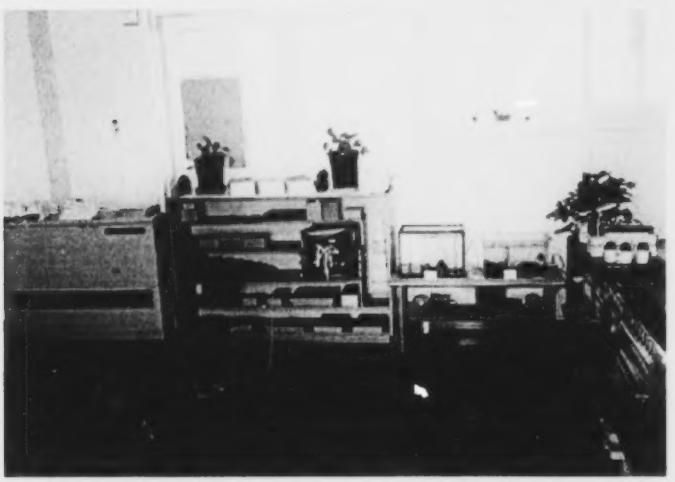
Teachers in Christian preschools were particularly welcoming of children with disabilities because they felt it was valuable for the nondisabled children to encounter someone who had characteristics that differed quite saliently from their own. Through daily interactions with children who were different from them in some ways, the students were thought to gain an appreciation for each individual but also to learn how to form relationships in spite of those differences. As the teacher at Arima said:

> *As you may have noticed, we have a handicapped child in the class. I pay particular attention to that child, but I also ask other children, "Please help him while I am working with these other children." At first, his learning or working speed was very different from the others. Because of that, he had difficulty in getting along with them. Gradually, however, he became involved with other children. In that process, the children came to understand each individual's differences and started to acknowledge each individual's characteristics. I think this process applies to children's mutual interactions in general.*

Perhaps because of the connection that their religious beliefs provided to Western thoughts and values, the directors of Christian preschools that I visited were more interested in learning about and adapting Western theories of early childhood education than were directors in other preschools. For example, Ms. Ishida, the director at Aizawa preschool, had sought wide exposure to Western theories of early childhood education. She had attended classes in the Montessori method, although the major emphasis of her training at a local Christian college had been on the methods of Froebel. She was also exploring in workshops the ideas of constructivists like Constance Kamii and was cautiously implementing new strategies for fostering children's emergent literacy, even though they appeared to contradict the Ministry of Education's policy of leaving literacy to the elementary schools. Activities on the day I

visited presented many opportunities to build literacy skills. The 4-year-old children were making vegetable soup with a recipe that featured written directions accompanied by pictures. The 5-year-old children were re-creating their experience at a summer fair. Using large cardboard boxes, they constructed food stalls and activity booths. Their writing skills came into play as they created signs, menus, price lists, and other artifacts.

A parent volunteer reads with two students at a Catholic preschool.



Montessori materials are available at this Catholic preschool.

Not surprisingly, the Christian preschools were the most similar to American schools of any that I visited. The cultural models inherent in Christian thought have obviously permeated the views of children in the United States to a profound extent. However, it should be noted that these models have been interpreted by Japanese early childhood educators and combined with Japanese cultural models; this appropriation process results in an orientation toward strengthening the individual's powers of self-expression, fostering self-knowledge, and cultivating personal interests—but the teachers expect children to use these skills to build relationships and form the ability to function well in group settings. This dual emphasis on individual development and social connection makes these schools likely to serve as models of good practice for American educators, who are apt to value these particular cultural models (see also Kotloff, 1993).

Buddhist Preschools

From the front, the Tennoji Buddhist Preschool building looks more like an insurance company than a preschool. The imposing modern structure is three stories high, with many windows whose darkened glass prevents outsiders from seeing in. Yet, when one moves through the entryway and passes through the hall to the play yard, the peaked, tile roof of a traditional Buddhist temple looms into view. A close examination of the school philosophy at Tennoji and the other Buddhist schools reveals how three traditional elements of Buddhist thought have been artfully synthesized with modern preoccupations about preparation for elementary school.

*Virtue (*toku*) as a Goal of Preschooling.* The essence of virtue, according to the staff at Tennoji, was in developing a sense of consideration for others (*itawari no kokoro*). They felt that kindness and consideration should be extended to all living things, including animals and plant life as well as humans. They emphasized this message in the weekly prayer service at the temple, and they provided practical experiences, like caring for the preschool's plants and animals.

Children attend a service at the Buddhist temple associated with the preschool.

The emphasis on showing consideration for others is consistent with Buddhist teachings on compassion. For Buddhists, both wisdom and compassion are needed to help relieve the pain and suffering of the human condition. Buddhist ethics include "a deep sensitivity to the life of the cosmos, an ecological consciousness which combines esthetic refinement with a sense of responsibility" (Dumoulin, 1994, p. 65). Japanese Buddhism is particularly explicit in its strong emphasis on compassion. For example, one of the strongest and oldest schools of Japanese Buddhism, the Shingon sect, urges its followers to practice Four Embracing Acts: charity, kind speech, beneficial acts, and adapting oneself to others.

For the director at Suma Buddhist preschool, informal daily prayer was another important vehicle for teaching compassion:

> *Through a variety of activities, we would like children to appreciate the spirit of Buddha. Putting one's hand together in prayer is the most important activity, particularly in today's*

> *society. . . . We teach the children Buddhist song and show them how to offer flowers to the altar celebrating Buddha's birth. . . . Obviously, young children do not understand a deep philosophy like this, but I want teachers to convey gentle feelings to the children. Through activities, we would like the children to appreciate gentle feelings. . . . Japanese put their hands together in prayer before eating a meal. They take doing so for granted. In Christianity, people say "Amen," which corresponds to the Buddhist chant of "*Namuamidaibutsu.*" A sense of gratitude is what we should consider most important. But it is today's Japanese people that tend to forget the importance of this activity, which is the foundation in life . . . children should extend their gratitude and then have a meal. Also they should extend their gratitude to their parents. They acquire this as a habit and this is most important.*

The Buddhist directors tried to be gentle in their exhortations about prayer as the means for developing a mind of appreciation. However, they were also quick to point out that Buddhism called for strength and determination as well as kindness:

> *Raising cheerful, gentle, and healthy children (*akaruku sunao genki na kodomo*) is our overall philosophy. This is from the Buddhist belief in which being strong, happy, and gentle is emphasized. You might think that in Buddhism you are generous to everything. This is not necessarily true. Living in a strong way is important in Buddhism. By being strong, I mean that one should do anything with confidence and determination.*

The view among the Buddhist directors I spoke with was that children were like wild animals and needed to be tamed in preschool. At Tennoji, 3-year-old children were considered to be a particular challenge because they do not understand the school rules, resulting in a situation that is "chaotic" and leaves teachers feeling as if they are "fighting a war." As one teacher put it:

> *I try to tame one child after another every day. I first try to tame those children who seem to adapt easily. I may tame one child today but may not be able to do so tomorrow. . . . By July [4 months into the school year], all the children have become calm and quiet except for a couple of children who are still naughty. . . . By now [November], they are calm and quiet.*

One of the least desirable characteristics of the unsocialized person, according to the directors, was a tendency to act in a selfish, egocentric manner. Therefore, the staff members at the Buddhist preschools were careful to enforce desired behavior firmly. As the director of Suma explained:

> *I am afraid to say that Japanese people have not yet developed the notion of democracy. If children are left as they are, they tend to be selfish. Japanese people in general tend to equate democracy with being self-centered. Japanese tend to ignore discipline unless they are told to observe discipline. When it comes to developing children's individual character (*kosei*), I think it is important to allow them to play freely and at the same time to discipline them. But children tend to do only what they want. They tend to seek self-centered individualism. They tend to ignore the notion of love or empathy (*omoiyari*). Thus we tend to feel that we need to control children. This is a very important aspect of Japanese education.*

In this passage, the director of Suma argues that Japanese people are by nature selfish and that they need structured socialization experiences to become "human" rather than animalistic. This view contrasts sharply with the opinions of the Christians, who emphasized the idea that children are "precious gifts"

from God. It is interesting that Japanese Christian early childhood educators hold this benign view, while the Buddhists articulate a more negative view of human nature, one that is similar to that of conservative Christian educators in the United States. The view of many evangelical American Christians is that adults must be vigilant to prevent children from succumbing to the wickedness that is the legacy of the original sin (Cleverly & Phillips, 1986).

Another strategy for avoiding individualism was to feature large group activities as much as possible. In a pamphlet for parents, the director makes an argument for large class sizes: "I suspect that most of you [mothers] think that small class sizes, such as 5 or 10 children per teacher, are better for your children. I do not think so. Among 20 or 30 peers in a class, the children are more motivated to learn by competing with each other. Therefore, class sizes of 5 or 10 students are not good at all. Of course, parental overprotectiveness (*kahogo*) is not good. Children aged 4 to 5 need a group" [translation].

Another component of the group orientation is developing the child's weak points rather than allowing him or her to focus on strengths, again illustrated in the parent brochure: "Young children need balanced care that focuses on various aspects of development such as music, intelligence, creativity, and health (physical ability). In a *youchien* there are future artists and future scholars. There are also future athletes, and yet it is not a good idea to develop only their athletic abilities. If you improve only the musical ability of a child who is good at music, this child will have unbalanced overall ability" [translation].

Children at a Buddhist preschool learn to play the drums.

*Obtaining Knowledge (*chi*).* Buddhists have traditionally focused on wisdom and faith as the key to salvation, in contrast to the Christian doctrine of love. Buddhism holds that ignorance, in combination with desire, are the forces that prevent people from moving beyond the pain of life on earth. A primary strategy for attaining knowledge is to study sacred texts. The texts themselves are considered authoritative, so the believer is a "hearer of the word." Expression of Buddhist faith has traditionally focused on "pious copying out of scripture," a practice that is still considered meritorious (Dumoulin, 1994, p. 55). Schools established by Buddhist monks from the 18th to the 19th centuries featured

intensive study of classical texts (Sato, 1998).

In the Buddhist preschools I visited, students were strongly encouraged to orient themselves toward external sources of knowledge, including both texts and the teacher. At Tennoji, this approach was partly illustrated by the children's memorization of sacred chants. In addition, they spend most of their day sitting at desks receiving instruction from the teacher. Literacy is a major focus of the curriculum, including instruction in reading *kanji* (Chinese characters) and writing *hiragana* (the simplified syllabary). Children engage in poetry reading and writing, and they learn the basics of grammar. They are involved in activities for the purpose of "developing their intelligence" (*chi no kaihatsu*), in which a wide range of materials are used to stimulate basic cognitive skills such as visual perception and memory, as well as such Piagetian principles as seriation and class inclusion. In addition, children attend classes in art, ballet, English, instrumental music, and choral singing.

Children pair up for a game at a Buddhist preschool.

Children use glue and markers during an art activity at a Buddhist preschool.

At Sannomiya preschool, a more radical curriculum emphasizes decontextualized cognitive stimulation. Children are exposed to complex visual and auditory patterns, which they memorize, with no exploration of the meaning of the stimuli. For example, in one exercise, teachers clap out a complicated rhythm for children to repeat. Children are shown flash cards representing the flags of nations around the world and call out the name of the appropriate country. They memorize poetry in archaic Japanese. According to the director, a Buddhist monk, the purpose of these activities is not to learn facts, but rather to receive brain stimulation in a rhythmic, fast-paced tempo:

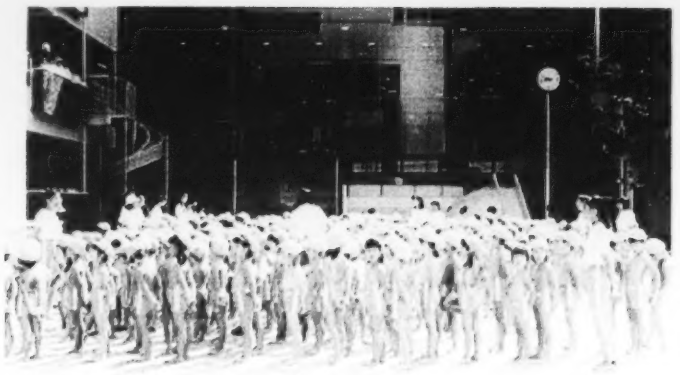
> *Cramming children's heads with knowledge is wrong. What children need is intellectual stimulation, as can be seen in what we do with children's language development. Visual stimuli represented by literacy are important so that children absorb many things from the environment. Children's brain functioning is strengthened by absorbing a lot of things from their environment.*

This approach to learning is consistent with what Hori (1994) calls "ritual formalism," the method used for teaching in Japanese Zen monasteries: "By ritual formalism, I am stretching one term to cover several kinds of behavior: repetition, rote memorization, behaving according to traditional prescription. In ritual formalism, students imitate form without necessarily understanding content or rationale. They are instructed in 'what' to do but given very little instruction in 'why' and 'how' to do it" (p. 21).

What unites the Buddhist preschools, then, is an emphasis on the ultimate authority of text and teacher as the source of knowledge. This view contrasts with the Christian emphasis that knowledge results from children's individual exploration in combination with teacher-guided social interaction among peers.

*The Significance of the Body (*tai*).* In the Zen tradition, composing one's body for meditation—sitting and breathing correctly—is crucial practice for attaining higher consciousness. By emptying oneself of physical discomfort, emotions, and thoughts, one achieves unity of mind and body and detachment from the self. Analysis of the moral implications of the physical state is commonplace in Japan, in Buddhist as well as secular contexts. In many of the preschools, not just those that were Buddhist, the children were constantly reminded to sit up straight and keep their feet together. In the Buddhist preschools, posture was just one of the concerns directors expressed about the physical development of the children. At Sannomiya preschool, for example, the children sat on benches rather than chairs in order to strengthen their back muscles and prevent them from lounging. They received constant reminders about how to position and move their bodies. When the teacher called attendance, for example, each child was required to raise his hand upon hearing his name. The teacher watched to be sure the child's arm was pitched at the proper angle, with fingers together and straight. The Tennoji preschool's pamphlet explicitly links posture and spirituality: "Going to the shrine makes one's spine straighten. One feels renewed, formal, and serious. One grows in appreciation for Buddha who protects us all" [translation].

Because much of the day was occupied with academic classes and music instruction, the children at strict Buddhist preschools had little opportunity to engage in physical activity. When it did occur, physical exertion was routinized and teacher structured. For example, children at Sannomiya preschool received direct instruction in how to shinny up a pole. Six children at a time approached their respective poles and waited at the bottom. Upon a signal from the teacher, they shinnied up and held their position until she blew her whistle, at which time they slid down and yielded to the next group. Physical activities at Buddhist preschools were sometimes designed to provide a challenge that would help toughen the children. This was especially true at Sannomiya preschool, where the director purposely designed a field trip to include experiences that would be physically challenging for the children.



Children line up for morning exercises at a Buddhist preschool.

The directors in the Buddhist preschools were also concerned about the spiritual and physical effects of receiving proper nutrition and exercise. The director at Sannomiya was concerned that Japanese children were overweight, out of shape, and "mentally sloppy" due to inactivity and poor diet. He deplored mothers who wished their children to be excused from strenuous exercise because of being "too weak":

> *My response [to such mothers] is, "If you insist on [exempting your children from physical activity] you must be sure that you can take full responsibility for your child's entire life." I would say, "Your child is not intrinsically weak. Instead, you have made him weak because you did not give him opportunities or experiences."*

A notation on the brochure for Tennoji preschool sums up the connection between nutrition, group orientation, and spiritual awareness. A list of five positive attributes of their preschool included the following: "The perfect lunch system!! Everyone eats the same thing, and everyone eats everything that is served because we are showing our appreciation to the living things whose lives we are taking."

The Buddhist schools I visited were among the largest of any schools that I saw; some had over 600 pupils. If the present economic uncertainties continue, these schools will likely continue to be a very appealing method for parents interested in giving their children a head start in school. On the other hand, their espousal of conservative political philosophy and adherence to traditional values may drive away parents with no personal knowledge of or fondness for the pre-War days (Allison, 1996). The demands for obedience are at odds with a powerful cultural model that sees children under 7 as little treasures that should be treated indulgently (Boocock, 1989), a model that may have become even stronger in recent times (Vogel, 1996).

Conclusion

The Japanese are sometimes described in Western writing as a nonreligious people. But it is more accurate to say that Japanese people express religiosity in a way that differs from that of Americans. Japanese appear more willing to mix and match religions, often invoking Shinto at birth and marriage, and Buddhism when faced with death. Yet, in spite of factors that work to blur the distinct philosophical

contribution of the various religions, we have seen concrete ways in which the ideologies of Christianity and Buddhism continue to influence Japanese preschools.

The clear effects of religious beliefs on the curricula and practices in these preschools suggest that similar analyses of American preschools are warranted. In the past decade, researchers and policy experts have been grappling with the feasibility of a global definition of child care quality that could be applied across all institutions in any community across the country. The elements of "appropriate practice" have been articulated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). These recommended practices were based primarily upon the child development research literature, as well as practitioner experiences (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). This viewpoint tends to privilege the "scientific" approach to raising children, with little explicit recognition of the fact that collectively based ideologies—including religious beliefs—may proscribe values and practices that conflict with the approach favored by many researchers. At the current time, there is so little information available about the philosophical bases, and favored practices, of church-based schools that it is impossible to speculate on the nature of possible tensions. As early childhood educators increasingly advocate moving toward "partnerships" and "dialogues" between early childhood educators and parents (Holloway & Fuller, 1999)—with each contributing their perspectives and knowledge to the conversation—the exploration of the role of religious beliefs will be increasingly imperative.

Notes

1. It is rather difficult to obtain a clear sense of the number of religious preschools in Japan. Many preschools that are housed on the grounds of religious organizations are not particularly affected by the religious beliefs of the host organization (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989); in these cases, the motivation for running a preschool is primarily financial. In 1990, there were 1,636 Christian preschools in Japan, of which two-thirds were Protestant and one-third Catholic; these numbers represent approximately 10% of preschools, which numbered 14,988 in 1990 (Christianity Almanac, 1990). I was unable to find any report of the number of preschools affiliated with Buddhist temples, but 40% of Buddhist temples raise funds through nonreligious activities, and among these activities, running a preschool is one of the most common. The most committed Buddhist directors are members of the Buddhist Nursery and Kindergarten Association; this association reports membership of 598 child care centers and 763 preschools (Japan Buddhist Nursery and Kindergarten Association, 1998).

2. In Japan, it is essentially impossible to gain access to preschool staff without some assistance from an intermediary. The faculty and officials who assisted with introductions were asked to select randomly among institutions falling within the categories established by the researcher (e.g., public vs. private preschools).

3. I have conducted several studies of Japanese education and child rearing over the past 15 years and authored numerous publications on these subjects (Holloway, 1988, in press; Holloway, Fuller, Azuma, Kashiwagi, & Gorman, 1990; Holloway, Kashiwagi, Hess, & Azuma, 1986). The data reported in this article were collected during a 6-month stay in the Kansai area sponsored by Fulbright. I have moderate proficiency in Japanese. During all interviews and observations, I was accompanied by a native Japanese speaker who was either a professional in early childhood education or developmental psychology.

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What Should Children Learn? Making Choices and Taking Chances

Rebecca S. New

Abstract

The basic premise of this paper is that decisions about children and their early educational experiences are culturally situated and, by definition, will reflect varying interpretations of appropriate educational aims and strategies. Drawing upon three decades of experience in the Italian culture as well as preliminary findings from a collaborative research project with five Italian communities (including Milan, Trento, Reggio Emilia, Parma, and San Miniato), the paper emphasizes the necessity and validity of diverse interpretations of early childhood programs, the relationship between goals for children and societal expectations for adults, and the importance of adult relationships (among parents, teachers, and community members) to the negotiation of educational goals for children growing up in a pluralistic democratic society.

Introduction

Debates on educational goals and content are older than the concept of schooling itself. Controversies regarding learning goals and objectives for children prior to the age of compulsory schooling have their own particular tenor. The importance attributed to adult decisions about how *or if* to formally educate young children is based on more than the need to prioritize educational aims; such decisions are inextricably linked to views about children themselves and their relationship to the larger society. As we approach the end of the 20th century, the significance of this question is heightened by a convergence of new understandings regarding young children's intellectual competencies and emotional vulnerabilities. Conflicting interpretations of the practical significance of this contemporary image of the child are exacerbated by increasingly polarized debates about whose responsibility it is to provide *and pay for* educational settings in which children's potentials are enhanced rather than wasted (Kagan & Cohen, 1996). Less often debated but essential to the resolution of both issues—the provision of educational

opportunities and the determination of curriculum goals—are the questions of what is meant by potential and who gets to decide (Kessler & Swadener, 1992; New, 1999).

The purpose of this paper is to consider the concept of children's potential as it is interpreted and supported by an early childhood curriculum. This discussion represents a first step in responding to the question—*What should preschool children learn?*—recently posed to me by the Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy, a group of scholars convened by the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council to address issues of educational goals and content in the preschool age period.

What *Can* Children Learn? Just about Anything, It Seems

Historic depictions of young children make clear their remarkable capacity to learn what is expected of them, whether that entails sleeping alone or with others, feeding and dressing one's self or caring for a younger sibling, crafting delicate origami or herding cattle, learning to speak sign language or to speak only when spoken to. Several decades of comparative research build upon this theoretical premise, with studies on parental behavior joined by those that include teachers as participants and classrooms as research sites. Such studies reveal the contexts and consequences of parental belief systems (Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Harkness & Super, 1995; LeVine, 1974) and the multiple images of childhood (Hwang, Lamb, & Sigel, 1996), each of which contributes to variations in cultural practices that serve as contexts for children's development (Goodnow, Miller, & Kessel, 1995). Such studies also support the hypothesis that what educators want for and do with young children within the contexts of institutional settings also reflect deeply held cultural values and beliefs, including contemporary assumptions about what is normative, feasible, necessary, *and good*.

This collection of beliefs regarding the sociocultural construction of reality, including but not limited to the cultural situatedness of notions of pedagogy (Gordon, 1995), has been subsumed within the emerging field of cultural psychology (Shweder, 1997). This field of study has much to contribute to current debate regarding children's potentials and associated adult responsibilities as they inform a preschool educational agenda. Research on children's care and early educational experiences in countries as diverse as China (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989); Japan (Lewis, 1995; Peak, 1992); and Sweden, Mexico, Italy, and Africa (LeVine, Miller, & West, 1988; LeVine, Dixon, LeVine, Richman, Leiderman, Keefer, & Brazelton, 1994) all have lessons for educators and policy makers grappling with the multiple and complex choices to be made. The Italian culture provides a fascinating context within which to explore this expanded set of theoretical premises as well as to demonstrate children's remarkable abilities to live up to a wide range of adult expectations.

What *Should* Children Learn? Contemporary Italians Have Their Own Ideas

Contemporary early childhood policies and programs in Italy are linked to that culture's enduring values as well as its more contemporary beliefs regarding the optimal course of a child's development. Some of those values and beliefs are reflected in the passage, in 1968, of Law No. 444 proclaiming pre-primary school as a right of all children. This law also acknowledges the legitimacy of diverse regional and municipal interpretations of *scuola materna—or scuole dell'infanzia*, as they are now often regarded—and specifies the critical role of parents in determining key features of children's early educational experiences. Although the 1968 law for universal preschool has never been fully

implemented, particularly in the south, well over 90% of Italian 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children attend one of three types of *scuole materna*: state funded, private (often church affiliated), or municipal (Note 1) (New, 1993). The expectation for municipally funded, locally organized services is quite high throughout the north and central parts of the country. The regions of Lombardia, Emilia Romagna, and Tuscany have played leadership roles in the provision of these services as well as national discussions of high-quality early care and education. The cities of Milano, Reggio Emilia, Parma, Modena, Pistoia, and San Miniato are among those whose programs for young children serve as exemplars of this triage of cultural values, regional support, and local interpretation.

Two decades of experiences within these and other Italian communities have contributed substantially to my current understandings about the possibilities of national policies (and financial support) for early childhood programs within a context characterized by change and subcultural diversity. Key principles of an Italian early education—the triangulation of a national policy establishing children's rights to a prescholastic experience with emphases on local variation and parental participation—serve as the basis for the current research project with colleagues in Reggio Emilia and the University of Milan, taking place in the cities of Reggio Emilia, Milano, Trento, Parma, and San Miniato (Note 2). The original impetus for the study was to situate Reggio Emilia's accomplishments within the larger Italian context, with a primary focus on home-school relationships, an essential but understudied aspect of this internationally acclaimed communal early childhood program (New, 1997). By nature of its multiple research sites, the study also provides an opportunity to expand upon a theory of sociocultural activity that considers subcultural settings as multiple reflections of and contributors to the larger cultural gestalt. Research strategies, designed to examine beliefs and practices associated with home-school relations and the purposes of early care and education, include ethnographic observations, semistructured interviews with parents and teachers, and questionnaires on educational aims and optimal child development. At this point in the study, 225 hour-long interviews (with parents, teachers, administrators, advisory council members, or other historical informants) have been conducted and approximately 2,400 parent and teacher questionnaires have been collected. Additional data include case study documentation in Reggio Emilia and observations on home-school practices in each of the sample institutions.

Initial findings that have emerged over the course of this research investigation, coupled with more recent experiences in other Italian communities such as Pistoia, Naples, and Palermo (Note 3), are germane to the challenges posed at the beginning of this discussion. Three features that characterize the municipal early childhood programs in each of these settings draw sustenance and coherence from larger Italian cultural values. These same features also have much to contribute to the further articulation of educational goals for preschool children in the United States:

- the significance attributed to children's **social relationships**,
- the **congruence** between developmental goals for children and the communal/civic expectations of the adults, and
- the **diversity of interpretations** associated with the promotion of these social relations.

The Importance of Being Together

The cultural value of interdependent relationships (New, 1998b) has been apparent throughout my many years of visiting and living in Italy. Each of my adult Italian friends lives in close proximity or contact with extended family members, and the young research assistants in our current project all reside in the same towns or cities as their parents. Interdependence with family members does not suffice, however, to illustrate the Italian belief in the importance of multiple and close human relationships. Family members—and sometimes entire families—participate in the afternoon *passagiata* so that they can

commingle with other citizens of their community. The presence and participation of children is integral to this cultural routine, and children-in-relation—with family members, neighbors, and other children—are often the center of adult interest. This valuing of social relationships is apparent in casual observations, where children are greeted and played with by adults for purposes of pleasure rather than distraction, as well as in the educational priorities mentioned most often by participants in the ongoing research study.

In each of the five participating cities, during interviews, on questionnaires, and in casual conversations, Italian parents and teachers acknowledged the critical role of early childhood programs in helping young children learn how to *stare insieme* [be together] with other adults and other children. Although this educational aim was sometimes attributed to the rapid increase in single-child households in Italy and the declining role of extended-family members in child care, others made clear that children need more than the family—they need experiences that will introduce them to life in a community. One mother in Reggio Emilia went so far as to proclaim that within the first few months of life, the child "needs to learn to live in a community with others. And the community needs to respond to her as a citizen with that right." At the same time, this mother, along with other parents and teachers, emphasized that neither the *asilo nido* nor the *scuola dell'infanzia* could in any way *replace* the role of the family. Rather, even the very young Italian child needs and deserves opportunities to develop multiple and complementary relationships.

Adult Relations as Model and Means

The care of young Italian children has historically been viewed as a social responsibility, even as the family has traditionally assumed the primary role. From this perspective, the child serves as a catalyst for adults to interact and communicate with one another. Within the context of early care and education settings, this sense of shared responsibility broadens the focus from parents and relatives to include teachers and other citizens, each of whom must develop effective relationships with each other. The importance attributed to these multiple adult relations on behalf of children is acknowledged in two national guidelines for Italy's early childhood services, the first associated with the period of *l'inserimento* [home-school transition] and the other related to the *gestione sociale* or social management of the day care or preschool setting. Many of the municipal programs previously described have contributed to the conceptualization of these guidelines; each gives particular emphasis to the critical role of the adult relations in contributing to the quality of children's early educational experiences.

L'inserimento: Welcoming the child and family to child care. Municipal *asili nido* (infant-toddler centers) such as those in Parma and Modena were instrumental in drawing national attention to the child's first transition to out-of-home care, and research in those settings continues to address issues of child, parent, and teacher responses to the challenges of new relationships (Terzi, Cantarelli, Berziga, & Battaglioli, 1997). Strategies that have been developed by teachers collaborating with university researchers include inviting parents to remain in the center with the newly enrolled child for as long as they think necessary, even for a period of weeks or even months (Bove, 1999). Educators emphasize the utility of this strategy as a means of establishing trusting relationships between parents and teachers as well as to assist the child. Such experiences are also seen as essential for the teacher to become acquainted with the interpersonal dynamics of the mother-child dyad (Mantovani, 1997).

Educators in other Italian settings also regard the transition period as critical to the development of successful relationships, although many handle the child's initial *l'inserimento* differently. In each of the cities participating in the research project, educators articulate the rationale and their particular strategies designed to make this "delicate moment" in the life of the child and family a successful

experience for everyone. In most cities where we have studied, the *l'inserimento* process focuses on the first days or week(s) of school. Reggio Emilia educators, in contrast, see the process of transition as part of a continuous cycle of exchange that is not limited to the child's initial entry into a program. Thus, Reggio Emilian educators create numerous opportunities for parents and children to meet and participate in informal events well in advance of the child's formal attendance. During the first week of school, parents and children come together to the center, where mothers or fathers work closely with the teacher to help the child explore the new physical and social environment. As the children become more comfortable, parents gradually move to adjacent rooms where they work together on the creation of materials for the classroom, discuss menus with the cook, or develop an agenda for subsequent parent meetings. During recent observations in one Reggio Emilian *asilo nido*, a group of parents alternated turns checking back into the classroom (even peeking through a window from the outside) to make sure that all of the newly enrolled infants were content. Their strategies of supporting this principle of "welcoming" also insure that parents develop relationships with each other and with each other's children.

Gestione Sociale: Social Management of Children's Early Educational Experiences. Another way in which Italians conceptualize relationships between children's families, community members, and the early childhood professionals is in the organizational concept of *gestione sociale*, a principle of social management and participation that was first articulated in regard to civic functions and labor management. The first public structure to actually legislate the concept of *gestione sociale*, however, was the municipal *asilo nido* of Reggio Emilia. This principle of parent and citizen participation was characteristic of Reggio Emilia's earliest efforts, and educators in the city played a leadership role in articulating the importance and practical elements of this interpretation of parent involvement. By 1971, their influence was felt at the national level when Article 6 of Law 444 affirmed that day care centers and preschools "*devono essere gestiti con la partecipazione delle famiglie*" [must be managed with the participation of the families] as well as with representatives of social organizations within the region. Today, each of the municipal programs participating in the research project previously identified has some form of citizen or parent counsel or management group, with varying degrees of authority, responsibility, and status. In every community, there is the recognition that parental participation is an essential ingredient to the determination of program success in meeting the needs of the community's children and their families.

Reggio Emilia educators repeatedly emphasize that "no one has a monopoly" on what children need and, as noted above, invite parents to become partners prior to, throughout, and even beyond their child's participation in the city's municipal programs. Because this form of parent and citizen participation is inextricable from and essential to the other better known features of the Reggio Emilia municipal program, the concept of *partecipazione* has, in fact, become a primary focus of the current research study. Because of the linkage that develops between parents and the program as a whole, many Reggio Emilian parents remain active participants in the city's school management council long after the children have left the program. Such continuity and longevity of personal commitment not only attests to the importance adults attribute to their own involvement in children's early out-of-home experiences, it also provides the basis for community and financial support for programs such as those found in Reggio Emilia, Pistoia, and San Miniato.

There is much more to be shared regarding these two national policies and their related strategies in the cities mentioned above. The point of this discussion, however, is not so much that adults are involved with their child and his or her educational experience, but that they also become involved with each other. Although there is no expectation that such adult relations will always be harmonious, there *is* the widely shared belief in their essential nature. As essential as adult and child relationships are, however, once we move beyond the particulars of each city's programs to consider the whole, a third

characteristic of Italy's early childhood services also becomes visible—the right of each community to determine the particular features of its own programs, including its interpretations of parental participation.

Common Ground, Diverse Strategies. This cultural emphasis on children's and adults' relationships appears widespread, and Italian preschool programs are characterized by a variety of organizational and pedagogical strategies designed to support this broad educational imperative. Although all Italian schools (including elementary) strive to keep groups of children and families together over the course of their enrollment, municipal *scuole dell'infanzia* (pre-primary schools for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children) have developed diverse staffing patterns and curriculum strategies to further promote children's social relations. Parents and teachers in the tiny hill town of San Miniato, for example, decided that mixed-age grouping was a strategic means by which to create a classroom community of children from 6 months to 3 years. This strategy was responsive to the adults' shared desire to promote prosocial behaviors and affiliative relationships in children without older or younger siblings, and the strategy afforded parents the opportunity to serve as supports for one another, giving and receiving advice on their children's varying developmental crises and accomplishments. Communal preschools in the metropolis of Milan also promote adult and child relationships in a variety of ways, including the hiring of a permanent extra teacher so that no substitutes are necessary in the case of teacher absence. In response to the diverse needs of immigrant and working families in a city the size of Milan, municipal early childhood professionals—again in collaboration with university researchers—established a number of family-child centers (*Tempo per la Famiglia*) for families whose children are not attending full-time child care.

It is not only through staffing, class organizational patterns, and alternative programming that these Italian early childhood programs support social relationships. Curriculum projects also support and maintain children's relationships with each other, with their teachers, and with the larger community. In some of Milan's *scuole dell'infanzia,* for example, children's initial interests and explorations in a particular media or domain (e.g., 3-year-olds' play in dirt and sand castles or their fascination with light or fear of the dark) are elaborated upon and sustained throughout the next two years, thereby creating a source of continuity and identity within each group of children, teachers, and their families. Parents, teachers, and children in Parma's communal *scuole* work hard to identify schoolwide themes that link children and classrooms, through murals, constructions, and donated relics that spread throughout the halls and libraries.

The tradition of apprenticeship characterizes the curriculum in Pistoia's municipal preschools, with an emphasis, for example, on needlework and sewing in one preschool and carpentry in another. These diverse emphases were *not* selected because of children's initiatives; rather, they represent areas of expertise and passionate pursuit among some of the adults in the school and neighborhood settings. The explicit goal, in this case, is to create opportunities for children to work with and learn from the adults as a means of connecting them to each other and to the larger community. The choice of the curriculum topic is less critical than its attributes: multiple avenues of exploration and practical use, with numerous and meaningful opportunities for creative thinking and skill development, each requiring some form of collaborative endeavor that links children to adults, school to community.

Certainly the best known of the Italian explorations in preschool curriculum is that of the municipal *scuole dell'infanzia* in Reggio Emilia. Virtually every feature (organizational, structural, pedagogical) in the city's several dozen preschools is designed to foster and maintain children's and adult's relationships with one another, from the organization of the physical environment to the long-term *progettazione* (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998). Even the classroom environment serves to connect children and families, past and present. Documentation panels purposefully promote the importance of *children* learning together, rather than highlighting the individual child. Photographic displays also

consistently include examples and images of former children and their families, thereby contributing to the sense of continuity and connection between one cohort of children and those coming before and after. In Reggio Emilia, as well as in the other cities described, educational aims and objectives include the fostering and utilization of relationships among and between adults as well as children (New, 1998c).

In each of the examples cited, adult and child relationships are supported through the child's home-school transition and the partnership expressed through the school management councils. These adult relations also influence curriculum decisions, such as those described in Pistoia, Parma, and Reggio Emilia. Parents and teachers in these cities have engaged in small- and large-scale discussions on the purposes and aims of their early childhood program, contributing to the dynamics of program development as well as the richness and diversity of adult relationships in the respective settings.

This collective belief in the importance of social relationships and the associated diversity of strategies is also reflected in recent educational reform initiatives within Italy. For example, the city of Naples, in "twinning" partnership with Reggio Emilia, has embarked on a project to create and support a number of new *asili nido* and *scuole dell'infanzia* in the city, with a major focus on connecting work with children to the lives and interests of adults. As has happened for years in Reggio Emilia, such an interpretation of schooling as a "system of relations" serves a powerful advocacy role. Thus, children and teachers in one Naples preschool proudly displayed the bottles of "wine" complete with "DOC" labels of origin that the children had produced, using time-honored traditions and tools as well as the support from their parents and grandparents. And what were the curriculum goals for this project? Certainly one of the aims was to connect children to their grandparents, many of whom were no longer providing their care and therefore perhaps not a part of their daily lives. This activity also served to advocate for the school itself, in a community where the concept of out-of-home child care, much less the idea of educational experiences for the preschool child, is still vulnerable to a more traditional image of children and child care. Families felt involved in rather than excluded from their children's early educational experiences. Children learned new skills (coordinating efforts, measuring, pouring, labeling), and teachers were inspired to seek other curriculum projects that could connect children and adults, inspiring everyone to collaborate and solve problems associated with an enterprise that mattered in the surrounding sociocultural context.

Although it is unlikely that preschoolers in the United States will embark on a wine-making project, the principles associated with an Italian early childhood education have much to contribute to American discussions of early educational services. Clearly, when adults continue to come to parent-teacher meetings long after their children have left the program, when children's preschool projects range in focus from the rituals of wine making and the physics of shadows of ants to the vicissitudes of love and death, war and peace, there is something more being considered about children's potentials and what they *should* learn than the days of the week on a calendar, much less how to sit still and leave each other alone.

Back to the Question

Discussions with American early childhood educators reflect our national ambivalence about a preschool education, especially when teachers are asked to prioritize their goals, aims, and objectives for young children. Even as they frequently mention these latter objectives (*sitting still, keeping their hands "to themselves"*), teachers also talk about the importance of promoting the child's self-esteem (Katz, 1995). At the same time that teachers and parents talk about the value of autonomy and

communicative competencies, they also include *learning to listen* and *working independently* as objectives for children's learning. When asked what children need to know before entering kindergarten, many teachers in the United States emphasize the importance of readiness in basic academic skills. This American interest in the independent and competent academic learner is in marked contrast to the Italian cultural valuing of social relations. And yet, American parents and teachers are also increasingly concerned about the young child's developing ability to solve problems and communicate effectively, to make friends and keep them, to resolve conflicts and negotiate agreements, and to develop safe ways to deal with negative emotions (Berman, 1997). As the media continue to remind us of the sometimes tragic consequences when such skills and dispositions go undeveloped, a burgeoning body of research also suggests that children's social competencies and relationships are directly linked with their subsequent school achievement and mental health. And so we've added social skills and creative self-expression to the already burgeoning list of "basics" in the early childhood curriculum, including preliteracy skills and understandings, multilingualism, technological skills, and prenumeracy and scientific thinking competencies—what's a teacher to do with these expectations?

When I was a classroom teacher, I struggled with my own need for social and academic reference points that were appropriate for the diverse population of children in my care. Ultimately, two rules were constructed that helped us—the children and me—negotiate countless decisions that we faced during our time together:

- Make this room a nice place to be . . . for everyone.
- Everyone has to do something hard every day.

These rules were useful enough that they survived my remaining years in the classroom. These rules also come close to capturing the essence of my vision of a curriculum worthy of imposing on young children. But on what bases did I make these negotiated agreements with the children in my classroom? What's "hard" for a 5-year-old? What's "hard" and also important enough to foster within the school environment? Clearly, I drew upon my own professional training and values, even as I gave significant credence to children's understandings of their social and emotional needs, not to mention their educational aims and interests. As I reflect on these early teaching experiences, I find some degree of satisfaction in my emphasis on children's social relations and the respect that I had for children's ideas as well as their imagined potentials. And yet, although I would have not imagined such a need at the time, I now understand that something (or someone) was missing from these negotiations: the children's families, other teachers, community members.

Conclusion

It has been noted by many others, including those who have studied U.S. and Italian early childhood policies and programs, that the concept of childhood is socially constructed (Saraceno, 1984) and culturally situated (Woodhead, Faulkner, & Littleton, 1998). The utility of cross-national comparisons, therefore, is likely through their ability to illuminate these diverse images of young children and not, as some would wish, in their ability to generate "good and reliable indices of educational effectiveness across countries" (Katz, 1999, p. 5). That is not to say, however, that studies in one cultural context may not be revealing about policies and practices in another (Lubeck, 1995). The politics of early education in the United States and the findings from the research being conducted in Italy are consistent with recent analyses of multiple and diverse interpretations of quality in early childhood services (Moss & Pence, 1994). Combined, they point to the need for a larger audience and a more deliberative debate than often characterize our professional deliberations on what is meant by children's potentials.

In conclusion, I would like to rephrase the question posed at the beginning of this paper—"What *should* children learn?"—with a more essential first question: What should *adults* do to insure that children learn those skills, knowledge, and concepts that reflect their individual needs, interests, and capabilities; promote their inclusion and full participation in a democratic society; and protect their rights as citizens to that knowledge that will enhance their current and future lives and productivity?

Educators have often referred to the classroom (early childhood and otherwise) as a "community of learners," and recent interpretations of this theme of community have emphasized the importance of inclusive physical, social, and intellectual environments as they might support the learning and development of all young children, including those of diverse cultural backgrounds as well as those with special needs (Mallory, 1998; New, 1998a). This article expands upon this definition of an inclusive community. To respond to the question of what children should learn, given the above perspective, requires that adults take stock of the current life of the community as it appears *inside and out* of the classroom and imagine how it might be better. The previously described classroom rules of several decades ago were based on my personal beliefs, my professional knowledge, and my political convictions of "how things ought to be" (New, 1999) And yet, as the wealth of comparative literature on cultural and subcultural groups here, in Italy, and elsewhere in the world makes clear, there is more than one interpretation of such a good life. Does that mean that anything goes? I hope not.

The Italian efforts described previously suggest several principles that might well support more effective and equitable processes for determining what adults hope and plan for young children in the United States:

- **Foster diversity in quality and respect the quality in diversity.**

  There is no single Italian early childhood curriculum anymore than there is a single American curriculum (Cornbleth, 1998) or Japanese curriculum (Holloway, in press). Even Reggio Emilia's understandings of curriculum continue to evolve as a result of their work with young children (New, in press). And yet, there are certain common features that appear to be essential in all of the Italian communities where we have studied, features that reflect adult intentionality in maintaining connections between the culture at large and early educational experiences. Many of these features are directly linked to Italy's self-image as an increasingly pluralistic democratic society. Thus, an Italian approach to curriculum—at least as observed in the previously described communities—requires the ongoing documentation and discussion of what children are and should be doing, by parents, teachers, and community members. What the diverse programs also have in common is a belief in the value of active citizen participation as the best means to promote and maintain a democratic society. Educational aims for young children are directed at and supported by these adult values and beliefs. From this perspective, quality becomes a function of multiple perspectives (Woodhead, 1996) based on personal knowledge and active engagement as opposed to some outsider judgment (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). There is no national delineation of developmentally appropriate practices; rather, the presence of negotiated diversity becomes, itself, a quality indicator (Mallory & New, 1994).

- **Learn about children in order to teach them well.**

  Negotiated discussions with parents and community members will only be as successful as the teacher is knowledgeable about the children at the center of the conversation. Teacher knowledge, in turn, must include information about children's lives outside the classroom as well as their performance within it (New, 1994). Teacher isolation makes it difficult for teachers to evaluate

the consequences, for example, of English-language immersion programs or to advocate for providing children *and their parents* with opportunities to explore new computer technologies. By venturing outside the classroom, teachers become more cognizant of the characteristics and possibilities in children's lives. Because Italian children stay together in the same classroom for years, teachers have ample and necessary opportunity to develop relationships with children (and their families and the larger community). This organizational feature, coupled with the growing practice to utilize documentation strategies as a form of ongoing assessment, create conditions for learning—and negotiating agreements about learning goals—that most American teachers and parents can currently only dream of.

- **Keep the doors wide open.**

  Teachers need not only to know *about* children's family lives, they also need to actively engage parents in dialogue about purposes of education (New, 1992). Such conversations help teachers with pedagogical decisions; they also invite more children and their families into the classroom. Only through such personal encounters with families and community members could U.S. teachers be expected to begin to understand, for example, why it is that Latino parents are suspicious of preschool academic curriculum (Fuller, Eggers-Pierola, Holloway, Liang, & Rambaud, 1996). Such engagement can go a long way to helping teachers in our pluralistic society recognize others' cultural frames of reference (Ogbu, 1994), and, in the case of Latino families, helping them begin to understand what their resistance to preschool means about their positions in the larger American society. Such an educational environment is not only healthy for young children, it is also conducive to the social construction of new knowledge as adults learn from one another. This extension of adult relationships builds upon the theoretical principles of diversity that Dewey (1926) advocated for and are now seen as essential in any democratic community of learners (Garrison, 1995). It also creates a means by which the early childhood classroom assumes a moral stance for children (DeVries & Zan, 1994) *and* the adults who send them there.

What Else Should Young Children Learn?

Perhaps the biggest gift that I have received from the Italian friends and colleagues with whom I have worked for the past two decades is the basic understanding that cultural differences are not necessarily predefined. Rather, they often reflect the choices adults make and the chances they take with their lives. Because so many Italian adults seem to understand that these choices influence the chances, current and future, of young children, they take that responsibility not just *seriously* but also *personally*. To that end, what I would most ardently advocate for, in discussions about "what children should learn," is that young American children would come to understand that what they do and think and feel is important to the adults who know and care about them . . . so important that we are willing and able to learn new skills, develop new relationships, and work together on their behalf.

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Notes

1. The term "preschool" in Italy refers to programs serving 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children; compulsory schooling begins at age 6 in Italy.

2. This research is funded by the Spencer Foundation's Major Grants Program and has taken place in two phases. Phase I: The Sociocultural Construction of Home-School Relations: The Case of Reggio Emilia and Contemporary Italy, Principal Investigators Rebecca New and Bruce Mallory (1996-1998). Phase II: Italian Concepts of Community, Social Responsibility, and Civic Participation: Childcare as Metaphor, Principal Investigators Rebecca New and Susanna Mantovani (1998-present).

3. Early childhood programs in these cities were visited as part of a recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) review team.

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A Comparison of the National Preschool Curricula in Norway and Sweden

Marit Alvestad & Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson

Abstract

Norway and Sweden have similar histories within the field of early childhood education and similar traditions of state financial support of children. Recently, both countries adopted national preschool plans for children ages 1 to 5 years old. When comparing the two plans, the first noticeable difference is that the Norwegian approach gives teachers a detailed framework for their work with suggestions on content, methods to be used, and expected outcomes. In contrast, the Swedish plan is goal directed with a short introduction on the perspectives and values of children's learning and development. It contains almost nothing about the methods to be used. This article compares the two national plans in terms of their evolution, purpose, and content. The article also discusses how the plans reflect theories of learning and knowledge formation.

The Social Framework for Preschools in Norway and Sweden

Norway and Sweden have long preschool traditions (Note 1), with roots in Froebel's kindergarten and a pedagogy built upon Rousseau and Pestalozzi, and later elaborated by Key and Dewey's work in the beginning of this century (Johansson, 1998; Balke, 1995).

In both countries, there is strong financial support for families with young children. All parents are entitled to maternity leave for 1 year and a monthly allowance for each child, which covers a major part of the income lost during the leave. A large part of the early childhood education system is financed by the state. In Sweden, there is also a law that guarantees a place in preschool for each working or studying parent's child within a few months from the day the parents request it (Socialstyrelsen, 1995:2).

Before 1996, children in both countries started school when they were 7 years old. Recently, however, the school entrance age was changed, and 6-year-olds are now in the school system—although "being in the school system" means different things in Norway and Sweden. In Norway, children begin school at age 6, with classes guided by the law and curriculum of the school (KUF, 1996). In Sweden, they still start school at age 7 (due to the law), but almost all 6-year-old children are in "preschool classes," which are guided by the same curriculum as compulsory school (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1998b).

Because 6-year-olds are now in school, there is more room for younger children in the preschools, and the number of infants and toddlers has increased in the preschool system in both countries. In 1997, 60% of Norwegian children attended preschool institutions (SSB, 1999). In Sweden, 72% of children between 1 and 5 years of age attended preschools during the same year (Skolverket, 1998a).

A difference between the two countries is that the main authority for preschools in Norway is the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, while in Sweden, the Department of Education is the main authority. Another difference is that in Sweden about 10% of the institutions are private, while in Norway, almost 40% of the preschools are private.

The preschool staffs in both countries are well educated. In Sweden, about 60% of staff members have university degrees as preschool teachers, and in Norway, about 30% of staff members have tertiary degrees as preschool teachers. The remaining staff members working in preschools are teacher assistants, often educated as child caregivers or the equivalent—positions that require secondary education. These percentages reflect a different approach to staffing in each country. In Norway, the structure is more hierarchical with one preschool teacher acting as the leader of preschool groups, while in Sweden, the structure is less hierarchical, with two preschool teachers sharing responsibility.

Preschool for young children is quite commoh in both Norway and Sweden because a high percentage of parents work. To accommodate working parents, society has taken partial responsibility for young children's education and well-being. The development of national plans for preschools also reflects society's awareness of the importance of the early years for lifelong learning.

The Way to a National Curriculum

Sweden has a longer tradition of creating national plans for preschools than Norway. Historically, Sweden has exercised more national "control" (e.g., an effort for a solid national model with minimum standards). In the beginning of the 1970s, "Barnstugeutredningen" (The Child Care Survey), which was an official state commission, published its work, based on substantial development work and research (SOU, 1972:26; SOU, 1972:27). The commission sought to elucidate content and methods in Swedish preschools. The commission tried to compensate for the past and adopted new theories of children's learning and development as starting points for the methods in preschools. Among other things, the commission suggested a general preschool for all children up to age 6. The commission also proposed an education based on communication and dialogue. In accordance with the aims of this document, from 1975 to 1979, the National Board of Health and Welfare, which at that time was responsible for preschools, published a series of books on different topics called "Working Plans" (Socialstyrelsen, 1975a, 1975b, 1975c, 1976a, 1976b, 1979). Many other publications of interest for preschool staff were also published during this time.

Because the committee report was used as part of the literature in the education of preschool teachers at that time, the Swedish "Barnstugeutredningen" also influenced the Norwegian preschool system (SOU,

1972:26; SOU, 1972:27).

In 1982, the Norwegian preschools were provided with a handbook called "Goal Directed Work in Preschool" (FAD, 1982). This handbook was the first public document for people working with young children in which the function of preschools in relation to family and society was stated. Historically, Norway was far behind the other Nordic countries in the development of day care institutions. (Note 2)

In 1988, Sweden developed its first national guidelines for preschools, called "Educational Program for Preschools" (Socialstyrelsen, 1988:7). In these guidelines, the framework for the community responsible for the preschool was established. For implementation of the general guidelines, another book was published, called "Learning in Preschool" (Socialstyrelsen, 1989), which was directed toward staff working with children. The National Board of Health and Welfare also took initiative in two research overviews to give staff a better foundation for understanding and making use of the guidelines (Kärrby, 1990; Pramling, 1993).

In the revision of the Norwegian national Act of Day Care Institutions in 1984, it was specified that all Norwegian preschools had to make an annual plan drawing up the institution's activities. Because of this requirement, preschool staff needed some guidelines (P-699-TRE, 1984). In 1987, the government developed a guide to assist staff in the compilation of the annual plan (P-0742, 1987). This document set forth directions for the plan's composition and form, but it did not say anything about the content of the preschools' activities. In 1992, the first draft of a national plan was developed in Norway (NOU, 1992:17).

Both Sweden and Norway have come a long way—from having no guidelines at all to having national curricula in place. Preschool teachers have slowly been introduced to the idea of having a curriculum—something that could not have been introduced 20 years ago. It could also be said that both national plans are based on the professional experiences and reflections of preschool teachers through their local development work over the years. In official documents, the view of preschool has changed from preschool being viewed as a place as far removed from "school" as possible to being viewed as a place where lifelong learning begins (Pramling Samuelsson, 1998).

Introduction of a Curriculum for 1- to 5-Year-Olds

In Norway, the "Framework Plan for Day Care Institutions" was implemented in January 1996 (Q-0903B, 1996; Q-0917E, 1996). The national Act on Day Care Institutions by this time had been revised, and the framework became a regulation within the Act (Q-0902B, 1995; Q-0513, 1995).

The framework was the first national plan for Norwegian preschools. In this plan, the government made its policy intentions clear and also formulated more explicit demands for educational work in preschools. The intention was that the plan should reflect the values of the preschools and, at the same time, bring in new features and offer the opportunity for further development.

Sweden's new curriculum "Curriculum for Preschool" (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1998a) for children up to 6 years old was implemented in August 1998. At this time, there was a change from having the Department of Social Welfare (Socialdepartementet) as the authority for preschools to having the Department of Education as the authority—a move that reflected a changing view of preschools. *Preschools are now part of the education system in Sweden, while they are still part of family policy in Norway.*

In Sweden, every community has a sum of money to use to educate its preschool staff in accordance with the new goals of the curriculum. In Norway, counties get money from the state for local development work in preschools in general. Applications from the preschools for work related to the implementation of the national plan are given priority. In both countries, there is an optimistic view of renewal within the field of early childhood education.

Methods of Analysis

Qualitative analysis is often used to enhance understanding of specific conditions under scrutiny. Qualitative analysis can be an interactive, dialectical process characterized by Dewey as "a particular form of social action that creates dialectical confrontations and produces inter-subjective meaning" (in Clandinin, 1985, p. 365). Within ethnography, document analysis is talked about as a source to generate new understanding of central phenomena. The goal of comparative analysis proposed by Glaser and Strauss is to use document analysis as a source in the search for grounded theory (in Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). In document analysis, comparative reading from other settings of relevance is seen as important (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

In our study, we use document analysis techniques to examine a broad range of official as well as unofficial documents. We also present some of the recent research and literature in the field. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that "rather than being viewed as a (more or less biased) source of data, official documents and statistics should be treated as social products; they must be *examined*, not simply used as a resource. To treat them as a resource and not a topic is to trade on the interpretive and interactional work that went into their production and to treat as a reflection or document of the world phenomena that are actually produced by it" (p. 137).

To deal with the fact that the researcher herself or himself is a part of the social practice is no simple matter. Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that the reflexive ethnographer needs to be aware that all classes of data will have their problems and that none can be treated as unquestionably valid representations of reality. Among other factors, documents should be seen in relation to context and use. In written sources, one has to consider the following questions: Who writes them? In what way are documents written and for what purpose? How are they read? On what occasions? With what outcomes? What is recorded? What is omitted? What is taken for granted? (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 143). Curricula are often a result of political compromises. One must be aware of the potential bias woven into the documents. It is also important to determine whether the document was produced in a social setting with an oral tradition. The preschool traditions in Sweden and Norway are part of an oral tradition, and the fact that we analyze these two national plans does not mean that we can determine how the documents function in practical life.

Our way of analyzing these documents can in one way be seen as analytical and including an inductive-deductive-inductive process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994). The process goes from empirical data to theory and back to empirical data. As the documents were read, central concepts from the documents were written down in columns. After listing these concepts, we read related literature and a wide range of official documents repeatedly. The final categorizing of data allowed further comparisons, analyses, and discussions in the light of historical traditions, contemporary practice, and recent research. The main results are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Two researchers conducted the analysis of the plans. That one of us comes from Norway and the other

from Sweden, and that we are familiar with our respective country's preschool traditions, helps make our conclusions more valid. Data are always in some way or another structured through individual experiences. "As important as whether a given account is 'accurate' or 'objective' is what it tells us about the teller's perspectives and presuppositions" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, pp. 130-131). In this light, the reading and our interpretations can also be seen as part of the aforementioned problems. It must also be noted that the awareness of our reflexivity was important to the process.

Two Different Kinds of Plans

The two national plans are formulated very differently. First, the Norwegian plan is called a *framework plan,* while the Swedish plan is called a *curriculum*. The Norwegian framework consists of 159 pages, while the Swedish curriculum consists of 16 pages. The framework plan creates structures within the educational work conducted in all preschool institutions, both in public and private sectors, while the Swedish curriculum directs only the public preschools. However, the Swedish curriculum does function as a guide for the private sector and will also be used as a quality gauge and an indicator, in accordance with the norms, for state interventions.

The Norwegian framework, to a large extent, discusses *methods* for the teacher to use when working with children and how teachers can use the framework plan in their own *planning and evaluation.* Norwegian preschools must, according to the Act, make an annual plan for the institution's work. The Swedish curriculum provides more or less *an approach to perspectives in learning, values, and goals.* It does not discuss methodological questions at all and focuses more on documentation of the activities than on planning as an instrument for evaluating quality issues.

Both plans clearly state that preschool should be viewed as the first step in a child's lifelong learning. This perspective is especially obvious in the Swedish plan, in which the structure of the curriculum for 1- to 5-year-old children (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1998a) is similar to the structure of the curriculum for 6- to 16-year-old children (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1998b). It is interesting to note that in Sweden, at the same time that the perspective on learning and knowledge formation has been refined and the values and content clearly spelled out, preschool has gradually become deregulated. Deregulation is strong in all areas of Swedish society, but it is especially strong in the school system where most decisions are supposed to be made by the students and their teachers in each classroom. Preschools, too, have become goal directed, which means that there are specific outcomes or goals to strive for and that it is the responsibility of each teacher to reach those intended goals.

When comparing the two plans, the first noticeable difference is that the Norwegian approach gives teachers *a detailed framework for their work with suggestions for content, methods to be used, and expected outcomes.* In contrast, the Swedish plan is *goal directed* with a short introduction on the *perspectives and values of children's learning and development*. It contains almost nothing about the methods to be used. One wonders if, in fact, the Swedish curriculum is more a philosophical framework, while the Norwegian plan is more a traditional curriculum where goals, content, methods (organization and working methods), and evaluation are formulated (Jackson, 1992). The Norwegian plan is fairly extensive because no planning document had previously been drawn up for Norwegian day care institutions. In addition, the plan was intended for use by staff with varying training and competence (Q-0917E, 1996, p. 6).

Structure of the Plans

The Swedish curriculum consists of two main parts. The first part is "Preschool's Ground Values and Mission," and the second part is "Goals and Directions" concerning the educational work in preschools. The second part of the curriculum consists of five groups of goals and directions: (1) norms and values, (2) development and learning, (3) children's influence, (4) preschool and home, and (5) cooperating with school (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1998a).

The Swedish curriculum explicitly states what children should learn in preschool. The content is tied directly to clearly defined goals that are set forth as an introduction to the first three chapters of the plan. The goals can be interpreted in terms of the preschool's responsibility to give children the opportunity to develop in the desired direction. The goals, however, must also be adapted to individual children to accommodate different lengths of stay in preschool, capabilities, and possibilities based on developmental and physical need. Staff members are guided by directives associated with each goal and are made aware of their responsibility. By using these directives, a staff member learns how each child develops and grows during her or his preschool experience.

The purpose of the curriculum is to provide preschool educational opportunities based on the fundamental components of care, foster care, learning, and education. Activities, therefore, should stimulate play, creativity, and a joyful learning experience, and they should also stimulate the children's interest in new experiences. Activities should help children develop new skills or enhance existing capabilities. Flow of ideas and diversity in experiences should also be explored (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1998a).

The Norwegian framework consists of three main parts. Part one is a general section stating objectives and basic principles underlying the work. The headings include "Day Care Institution's Role in the Society" and "Aims and Values of Day Care Institutions." Part two is about content and areas of experience and learning. This section contains "The Framework Plan—Totality and Interpretations"; "Social Interaction, Play, and Day-to-Day Activities"; "Culture and Curriculum"; and "Sami Language and Culture." Part three discusses using the plan. It includes chapters entitled "Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation"; "Responsibility, Forms of Operation, and Collaboration"; and "Development of the Day Care Institution."

The plan states that all children in Norwegian preschools should in some way or another *experience* five subject areas during a year, which are called the preschools' *time-limited or periodic content*. These subject areas are (1) society, religion, and ethics; (2) aesthetic subjects; (3) nature, technology, and environment; (4) language, literacy, and communication; and (5) physical activity and health.

Each of the five subject areas covers a broad area of learning, offering preschool children opportunities to acquire experiences and knowledge and to learn skills and develop attitudes. In the plan, these areas are integrated and are *to be present in day-to-day life, in play and social interaction* (i.e., in the *continuous content*).

The plan sees content and working methods as integrated. The children are supposed to learn through play and social interactions. The framework plan highlights the importance of play, creativity, joy, and humor as factors permeating work in all learning areas. This emphasis is shown in an overview model in the plan (Q-0903B, 1996 p. 30). The Norwegian plan sets up groups of goals at the end of the chapters presenting each subject area. Content and goals of religion and ethics are set forth in a special section within the first subject area. The plan has an overall emphasis on the importance of continuity and progress in the preschools' content, and it suggests that as children move into their older preschool

years, more time will be spent on adult-supervised, structured work in connection with the five subject areas (Q-0903B, 1996, p. 38).

In the Swedish curriculum, there is an obvious distinction between the child's individual development and the responsibility of the teacher. In the Norwegian plan, the teacher's work and the child's experiences are intertwined.

Looking at other content areas in the two plans, we see a certain similarity when it comes to the substance of the plans' content. The tradition as well as the idea of renewal is present in both plans. Historically, in both Norway and Sweden, preschool teachers do not begin the teaching of reading, writing, and mathematics (Johansson, 1998; Balke, 1995). This practice is based on the belief that preschools should not compete with schools. Also, preschool is supposed to be an alternative form of education, different from school. Today, however, we can see the same subject areas in both plans, although they are not expressed in terms of reading, writing, and mathematics. In both plans, there is also a strong emphasis on thematic learning instead of subject-focused learning. If we look at the areas of language, literacy, and communication, it seems that the Swedish plan focuses more on the process of reading and writing, while the Norwegian plan focuses more on development of language in general.

The Norwegian national plan provides a wide framework or *a maximum plan*, within which the staff can make choices. The Swedish plan is a curriculum, giving clearly defined goals for different areas in which each child is striving to develop knowledge and learn. In this respect, it can be viewed as a *minimum* or floor for what children are supposed to earn. This purpose is not spelled out in the preschool curriculum, but it is stated in the continuous curriculum for 6- to 16-year-old children. The wide framework or maximum plan is focused on the teacher's choices, while the minimum, to some extent, is focused on the child.

Differences in Statements of Values in the Plans

In both countries, the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child provides a basis for the national plans. In the Norwegian plan, values such as "respect for life, equality, tolerance and respect for people from other cultures, tolerance and respect for people with disabilities, equality of the sexes, altruism and solidarity, justice, truth and honesty, peace and understanding, responsibility for conservation of nature and culture, and responsibility for others" are central in children's development in preschool (Q-0917E, 1996, p. 13).

The Norwegian plan underlines the responsibility parents and family have for the care and upbringing of children, and it also recognizes parents' right to choose education for their children. The family and preschools are seen to have different functions. The preschool is seen as a supplement to the home. The Norwegian plan points at the preschools' preventive role in society.

"The Norwegian preschools are to be built upon the ethical values which are deeply rooted in Christianity and are supposed to have a broad acceptance among the public at large. The day care institution shall build its activity on the ethical ground values that are rooted in Christianity, and that are presupposed to have a broad acceptance in the Norwegian people" (Q0903-B, 1996, p. 22). The framework plan states that neutrality in values is neither possible nor desirable. Preschools have to work with ethical questions, concretized through cultural traditions and major Christian festivals. Continuity is important, because both schools and preschools are built upon the same statutory statements of values. The parents have the main responsibility for children's upbringing, and they must guide their

children in matters of lifestyle. In this matter, cooperation with parents is highly recommended and stressed.

In the Swedish plan, one task is to develop values according to society or, in other words, an ethical code of democracy. This code should underlie the activities in preschools. "Preschool is resting upon the ground of democracy," the curriculum states (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1998a, p. 7). Further on, the plan says that the preschools' activities are to be in accordance with fundamental democratic values. Care of and respect for other human beings in the form of justice and equality should form the basis for activities. Children develop ethical values and norms in everyday experiences. Adults' ways of relating to children and the world around them influence children's understanding and respect for democratic values in a society. Children's experiences should be focused on understanding and humanity, and they should be based on facts and comprehension (Skolverket, 1998b).

Although the two national plans are built upon much of the same *humanistic traditions*, they are grounded in different value systems. While the Norwegian plan is built upon *a religious, Christian base* (Note 3), the Swedish plan is built upon *a democratic base*. A democratic approach is expressed in the Swedish plan in the chapter "Children's Influence." In one of the chapter's sections, the development of children's ability to understand and act on democratic principles, through participation in different kinds of cooperative activities and by framing decisions, is emphasized (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1998a, p. 14). The plan also clearly emphasizes a group perspective, both in relation to the work with children and the staff's approach to conducting their work as team members.

While the Swedish curriculum speaks about the *staff as a team*, the Norwegian plan stresses *each staff member's own individual responsibility* in her or his work with children, although it also says that teamwork is important. The framework plan stresses that it is *the individual preschool teacher who has the main responsibility* and is seen as a guarantee that the preschool will be run as a pedagogical institution (Q-0903B, 1996, p. 109; Stortingsmelding nr. 8, 1987-88, p. 88).

Values in Children's Everyday Life

In the Swedish curriculum, allowing children to have an influence on their everyday life in preschool is formulated as a specific goal. Preschool should strive to give each child adequate opportunities to develop the following abilities (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1998a, p. 14):

- the ability to express thoughts and opinions, and thereby gain influence on her or his situation;
- the ability to take responsibility for her or his own actions and for the environment of the preschool; and
- the ability to understand and act in accordance with democratic principles by being involved in different forms of cooperation and decision-making processes.

According to the Swedish plan, democracy and aspects of it should constitute both content and method in the everyday life of children. Preschool should actively and consciously influence and stimulate children to develop an understanding of the common democratic values in our society, to make it possible for them to take part in society in the future. Preschool should strive for each child to develop the following (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1998a, p. 11):

- openness, respect, solidarity, and responsibility;
- the ability to respect and understand other human beings and their situations;

- the ability to discover, reflect upon, and state her or his own opinion on different ethical dilemmas and life questions in everyday life;
- an understanding of all people's equal worth, independent of gender and social or ethnic background; and
- respect for all living species and care for our environment.

Besides the more specific goals, cooperation with parents is viewed as a necessity.

One of the subject areas in the Norwegian plan is "society, religion, and ethics." Through work in the subject area "local environment and society," the preschool can help children (Q-0903B, 1996, p. 65):

- get to know the local community through direct experience and discover how different functions in society and working places are connected and their importance for day-to-day life;
- realize that all people, young and old, are members of the community and that they can contribute to the community;
- get to know about social and cultural differences in the preschool and the local environment; and
- get a beginning idea of how society is built, historically and at present.

The Norwegian plan says that preschool has an important function as a transmitter of tradition and should strengthen children's identity and ties with their home community by acquainting them with local history, landscape, architectural traditions, and local song and music traditions.

The Norwegian plan also states that in the area of religion and ethics, preschool should help children (Q-0903B, 1996, p. 70):

- gain insight into Christian basic values and their place in our cultural heritage;
- acquire society's established norms and values;
- get answers to religious questions and get the opportunity to wonder in silence;
- gain knowledge about the background and traditions of Christianity and experience the joy of the Christian festivals;
- live in a loving environment and learn to take responsibility for the immediate environment, her or his home, country and people, nature and culture; and
- develop interest in and respect for people with different cultural and religious backgrounds by organizing distinct cultural meetings.

It becomes quite clear that the goals in the Swedish curriculum focus on *developing a democratic person*, while the goals in the Norwegian plan focus on *Christianity and local culture* as central in the upbringing of children. On one hand, it could be argued that the values of Christianity and democracy are similar because they both promote respect for all human beings and plead for good behavior towards each other. On the other hand, Christianity has certain beliefs and values that are there to be followed, while the ideal of democracy is supporting people in finding out what is good in many different ways. These perspectives have to be viewed in relation to traditions and the social order in the two countries. In Norway, the Church, and thereby the belief in Christianity, has a strong position on a state level. In Sweden, the state and the Church work separately, perhaps because Sweden has become even more multicultural than Norway.

Table 1

An Overview of the Two National Plans

	Sweden	Norway
Authority	Department of Education	Ministry of Child and Family Affairs
National Plan	Goal oriented	Framework oriented
Methods	None	Extensive
Content	Understand aspects of the world, develop skills	Experience and take part in culture and curriculum
Values	Humanistic Democracy, ethics	Humanistic Religion, culture, ethics
Staff	Teamwork Shared responsibility among teachers	Teamwork Preschool teacher mainly responsible
Means for Development	Documentation	Annual planning
Focus	Product in the future	Process

The differences between the two plans are summarized in Table 1. We have chosen just a few interesting aspects that reflect different approaches in the two plans. The authorities for preschools are different, and while the Swedish plan is goal oriented, the Norwegian plan is framework oriented. Another difference is that methods are not mentioned in the Swedish plan, while they are a central part of the Norwegian plan. The "what" aspect is clear in the Swedish plan (what children are supposed to learn), while the "how" aspect (how to work with children) is clear in the Norwegian plan. The plans share some values, but important differences exist. Both plans stress the teamwork of the staff, but they differ in matters of responsibility. In the Swedish plan, documentation of the work is an important task, while planning is more a focus for Norwegian preschool staff. In a way, the Swedish plan focuses on the product (in the future), while the Norwegian plan focuses on the process.

Theories of Learning and Knowledge Formation

Sommer (1997) is one of many researchers who believe that most theories of child development are old-fashioned and not appropriate for studying children in today's society. Several explanations are offered for this view. Some researchers believe that society has changed so drastically that it bears little resemblance to what society was like when these theories were developed, and therefore children today get different experiences compared with children two generations back. Very few children in the Western world grow up with a mother who stays home to care for the children and the family full time. Instead, children have relationships with, and learn from, other children and adults during an extended day. Another factor may be that the view of children has changed in modern society.

Theories of children's learning within the field of early childhood education have been based on

developmental theories, in which children's biological stages have been considered to be of great importance for learning. Both Piaget (1973, 1977) and Vygotsky (1972, 1978) have based their theories on hierarchical maturity stages. The difference between their theories has been a question of whether it is the child's stage or social interaction that is at the core of development.

One question in the discussion about children's learning is whether development or learning comes first. Other theories about children in school have focused on learning in terms of what children can remember as a capability influenced by the world around them, without taking into consideration the child's development. Earlier theories have focused on either the inner or the outer world as the most important factor in learning. One implication of modern research on young children is that learning and development as two separate categories have no relevance because the inner and outer worlds are dependent on each other and influence each other (Pramling, 1993). There is no development without learning, and no real learning without development (Doverborg, Pramling & Qvarsell, 1987).

A new paradigm of learning, which suggests understanding as a way of experiencing something, is gaining support (Marton & Booth, 1997). When a child (or an adult) learns something, her or his experience of the world changes and a "New World" appears. In other words, knowledge formation is seen as an internal relation between children and the world around them. Knowledge becomes subjective and objective at the same time because the outer world cannot be distinguished from the child's earlier experiences. The two earlier separated notions, development and learning, now become two aspects of the same phenomenon.

This change implies a change in the perspective of seeing children as psychological and biological individuals who are not yet fully developed but who have needs that are to be satisfied. Stages of development and maturity were seen as a base for teaching, for what children could "take in." Children and their capabilities can, in this perspective, be measured and evaluated as being objective—either children know something or they do not.

The Concept of Learning in the Plans

Our further analysis will focus on the plans' perspectives on learning, which can be interpreted from the plans and from relevant background materials. Our conclusions are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparison of the Plans' Perspectives on Children's Learning

Aspects of Learning	Sweden	Norway
Scope	The entire child	The entire child
	Comprehensive concept of learning	Comprehensive concept of learning
Play/Learning	Integration play-learning	Play *and* learning
Goal	Develop knowledge on different aspects of the world	Develop basic competence
		Knowledge, skills, attitudes
Method	Continuous	Maturity and stages
Care/Education	Care as presumption for learning	Education and care as two of a kind
Structure of the day	No distinction between formal and informal learning	Distinction between formal and informal learning

The Norwegian plan is strongly oriented towards the upbringing of children in relation to the local environment. Transfer of culture and values adapted to local social environments is seen as a central task. Learning is seen as part of the child's *upbringing*, which includes a strong emphasis on Christian norms and values in the social competence of daily life today. Emphasis is placed on the process of child rearing and transmission of culture. The Swedish plan is more cognitively oriented towards *children's learning*. The perspective is to a larger extent on children's development of skills and abilities. Skills and values are therefore relevant to what society's general needs are in the future. The Swedish plan's emphasis is placed on the product as a result of learning skills and abilities through mediation of knowledge believed to be needed in the future, while the Norwegian plan's emphasis is placed on the process of growing up in society today built on its historical roots and traditions.

An integration or separation of learning and play is interesting—especially if one takes the perspective of Broström and Vejleskov (1999) in which they discuss "learning play" and "play learning" as a way to show how these two notions have to be viewed in a new light in modern education. Traditionally, play and learning activities have been viewed as two distinct activities, in that play has been the child's own world, while learning activities have been related to a teacher. These two paradigms seem to acquire new meaning in this era of modern research (Pramling, 1994).

In the Norwegian plan, children are supposed to be exposed to different subject areas, while in the Swedish plan, children are supposed to develop a beginning understanding of different aspects of the world around them. In both plans, the whole day is used to influence children's learning. The Norwegian plan stresses informal learning and says that learning should be achieved through play and social interaction and an integration between different subjects and daily activities. However, it also indicates that children learn basic competencies, such as social competence and an ability to communicate, during the informal time, and they learn about different subjects during activities planned by the teacher (Q-0903B, 1996, pp. 40-41). The Swedish perspective focuses more on continuity, while the Norwegian perspective focuses on the maturity stages. In Sweden, the child's life-world and earlier

experiences are seen as significant aspects of theories of learning, while in Norway, a mixture of theories of learning and child development is more often used (e.g., cognitive, emotional, and social theories).

With the above discussion as background, we would like to point out that the Norwegian plan states that learning is both formal and informal and that the plan uses and discusses both of these concepts. The view of learning as a distinction between *informal and formal learning* (as two different kinds of learning processes) is connected to *continuous content* and *periodic content*. When the formal learning aspect is discussed, the framework states, "It is the adult's duty to give the children experiences that are stimulating and are structuring the child's learning, and to secure progression that suits the child's needs and abilities." The plan underlines the importance of informal learning. In fact, the plan discourages the staff from using formal learning: "In the work with the youngest children who are under school age, you should worry about emphasizing formal learning and acquisition of specific knowledge" (Q-0903B, 1996, pp. 30, 41, 46). It also stresses learning through care.

Learning and knowledge formation lead to understanding, seeing, and conceptualizing. In both plans, learning becomes a question of awareness, of creating a meaning. The concept of meaning is central in relation to learning as expressed in the Swedish plan (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1998a; SOU, 1997:21; SOU, 1997:157). Under the heading "Knowledge and Learning," it is stated that:

> Knowledge is conquered through learning, a kind of learning that happens in different ways in different environments: Through verbal activity, writing, reading, and acting; this can occur in texts and pictures, but learning is also in drama, play, singing, and music. It is not only through the mind we learn, we are learning with the whole body. And everything we learn cannot be verbalized. (SOU, 1997:157, p. 47)

Three aspects of knowledge are pointed out in the Swedish plan: (1) the constructive aspect of knowledge—knowledge is a way of making the world understandable and meaningful; knowledge is not only a reflection of the world; (2) the contextual aspect of knowledge—knowledge is related to a context, towards which knowledge takes on meaning; and (3) the instrumental aspect of knowledge—knowledge is a tool for cultivating and managing the world. Play is seen as an important dimension in children's learning. In play, children develop their communicative and social competence. Play is especially important in work with children in need of special help and care.

The notion of knowledge in the Swedish curriculum includes facts, understanding, skills, and implicit aspects of reality. Knowledge and learning are, in this perspective, seen as part of a process that requires interaction with other people and phenomena in the world. Knowledge and learning are not only related to the individual person but to something that is created and defined together with other persons. In line with this way of looking at knowledge is the view of the child as an active co-creator of her or his own knowledge.

In the Norwegian plan, the child in her or his entirety is emphasized. The plan regards development of the child as a dynamic interaction between physical and mental capacities. The plan states that the child is not to be seen as separate from the environment that surrounds her or him. The child is from the very beginning influenced by people and the environment, and in turn, the child influences the environment. The child is seen as social, active, and exploring, developing through interactions with other adults, children, and the environment. Children are to be met with warmth, acknowledgment, and encouragement. Further, it is emphasized that all children must be encouraged to see themselves as valuable and accepted. The right to participate, in ways appropriate to their age, is not seen as a waiting time or a "pre"-school time for children. Childhood cannot be pushed forward or recaptured—it has to

have its time and be seen as a period in life with a value of its own. The Norwegian framework is a tool for adults; however, it points out that: "It is the child's own viewpoint that always has to be present in all planning in day care institutions. It is the adult's duty to seek the children's perspective when work is planned" (Q-0903B, 1996, p. 18).

The Norwegian plan builds upon an overall view of the concept of learning. The care for the child and the interaction between the adult and the child in situations of care are seen as an important base for the child's learning. Care is defined as having two parts. All actions attached to nurturing, including physical care, are considered as care. The adult's attitude towards the child who receives the care is stressed. Care is then characterized by sensitivity, nearness, ability, and a will to interact (Q-0903B, 1996, p. 30). In this approach, the child is viewed in biological, psychological, and social contexts.

In other words, in trying to develop a new way of thinking about early childhood education by combining the traditional school (formal) and the preschool tradition (informal), we end up with something that is neither preschool nor school. There have been official discussions of school and preschool pedagogy in both Norway and Sweden (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1996:61; Stortingsmelding nr. 40, 1992-93). In Norway, research on a national level has been done on this topic in relation to the school entrance age (Haug, 1992, 1996). In Sweden, an overview of research in this field has also been carried out (Pramling Samuelsson & Mauritzson, 1997).

Summary and Discussion

In Sweden and Norway, most preschool teachers and staff have warmly welcomed the new plans. They believe the respective plans will help them in their work with children, as well as contribute positively to the status of preschools in their countries (Alvestad & Nordvik, 1993). But the fact that the two countries have national curricula does not mean that the plans are being implemented consistently. Questions about the implementation of the plans must be raised and discussed from different viewpoints (Jackson, 1992; Goodlad, 1988; Gundem, 1990).

Implementation is not a simple task of just reading the plan and agreeing with it. The implementation of national curricula is a complex area, raising varied and difficult questions (Alvestad, 1996). In both countries, some financial support is given by the national governments to help with implementation, but questions about implementation remain: Is funding sufficient? Do staff members get enough time to discuss the content of the plan and the different implications the plan can have for their practical work? What does the plan mean to the preschool teachers and their teaching assistants? How do they use the plan? What is their understanding of the concept of learning in the plan? And what is the relation to their practical work with the children individually and in groups? The Norwegian framework plan leaves room, for example, for very different interpretations of how the five subject areas should be interpreted and used. The Swedish plan leaves room for, among other things, a variety of methods. These are all important questions for future study (Alvestad, 1998, 1999).

What is new in the plans? What is it that preschools have not been working with previously? The main difference in the Swedish national curriculum is that it is a regulation and not general guidelines, as it was earlier in its development. Related to the implementation of the plans is also the process of evaluation. This task is central to the staff in preschools in both countries. Staff members have to work on all different aspects of child development and learning as well as focus on values and norms. In both plans, there are also new content areas, such as beginning mathematics, reading, and writing, which previously were subjects children were expected to learn in school but which now have also become the

preschools' responsibility. Preschool staff previously focused on young children's social competence as the main aspect of their work. Now preschool staff cannot focus only on children's social development or specific aspects of learning and development. All staff members have to work on the whole as well as on all aspects of learning and development. This goal is more clearly expressed in the Swedish curriculum than in the Norwegian framework plan where the teacher still has more freedom to choose what the focus of her or his work will be.

Both plans could be seen as being grounded in a sociocultural perspective. But when we look at the aspects of learning that are central in both plans, they differ in some ways within this perspective. In the Norwegian framework, the concept of learning is strongly related to socialization, care, and the upbringing of the child. In fact, the plan discourages preschool teachers from emphasizing too much formal learning and working on specific knowledge in preschool. The Swedish curriculum focuses on learning holistically but also points out the cognitive view of developing children's understanding about different aspects of the world around them. Maybe it could be said that the Swedish perspective is more sociocognitive. The Norwegian perspective stresses aspects such as maturity, the needs of the child, and socialization—an approach that seems to be more in line with a traditional preschool perspective and the earlier Educational Program for Preschools in Sweden (Socialstyrelsen, 1987).

Looking at the content of the plans and the organization of the staff working in preschools, it could be said that the Norwegian plan is very different from a traditional school curriculum. At the same time, the hierarchy of the staff is more similar to the school structure as it used to be. The Swedish structure seems to be the opposite, with a curriculum more like the school curriculum, while at the same time, there is no hierarchy in the staff structure as we traditionally see in school.

Historically, both in Norway and Sweden, the ideal for preschools was the typical good home. The institutions in Norway, however, were not discussed in public until the 1950s. It was not until 1975 that preschool was mentioned as a pedagogical institution and got its own legislation. Preschools have a strong tradition as privately run institutions. Still today about one-third of the Norwegian preschools are run privately. Next to parent-owned preschools and sole-proprietor preschools come private preschools run by religious congregations or societies. In Swedish society, family and young children were discussed as a political matter as early as the 1950s and 1960s. As mentioned earlier, this trend resulted in the Swedish government in 1968 calling a committee to analyze the content and methods in preschools (Barnstugeutredningen). Development in Norway was much slower. The reason for the slower tempo in Norway can be traced to its later industrialization and to less urbanization. Another factor that could have had an influence was that Sweden had a stronger connection to the continent of Europe (Balke, 1995, pp. 243-251).

Today, however, there is a shift towards more academically oriented preschools in both countries. With this change of perspective, there is a risk that the staff might begin to treat preschool as school. There are, of course, examples of these kinds of school-like preschools both in Sweden and in Norway (Alvestad, 1989). To avoid this development, it is important for preschool teachers to implement the new curricula without losing the heart of the preschool tradition, which takes a great deal of training. Preschool teachers have to understand the child's perspective but also understand a new theoretical perspective on learning and knowledge formation (Doverborg & Pramling, 1995; Pramling Samuelsson & Lindahl, 1999). In other words, teachers have to learn about children from children. Teachers also have to learn about the mandate of society, as it is formulated in the curriculum and other official documents. They have to create their own understanding of how the new plans differ from earlier guidelines and the implications of the plans for each institution. They have to, for example, turn central concepts like democracy (as well as play and learning) upside down and discuss them from a theoretical as well as a practical point of view. Finally, preschool teachers have to learn about themselves—to learn

about how to become aware of their own values and beliefs, and how these are influencing everyday interactions with children (Pramling Samuelsson, 1998).

Notes

1. In Sweden, preschool is the official name for day care as well as kindergarten, whereas the term day care is used in Norway. To make it easier for the reader to follow, when we do not refer to Norwegian texts, we will use the term preschool for both countries.

2. Day care institutions were for the first time discussed publicly in 1951. In 1953, they were defined as child welfare institutions, under the Act of Social Welfare, and were headed under the former Department of Social Welfare. It took more than 20 years (1975) before Norway got an Act for Day Care Institutions that regulated day care centers as pedagogical institutions (Balke, 1995, p. 246).

3. Owners of private day care institutions may prescribe in their by-laws that the plan's second paragraph concerning upbringing that accords to Christian values should not apply. Private day care institutions and day care institutions owned or run by parishes of the Norwegian State Church may incorporate in their by-laws special provisions pertaining to ideological aims (Q-0902B, 1995, p.7; Q-0917E, 1996, p. 4).

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Public Factors That Contribute to School Readiness

Diane Edwards

Abstract

Noting that school readiness—the preparedness of children to learn what is taught in schools—is the cornerstone of today's education reform, this article presents a brief overview of the key public factors that contribute to school readiness. These factors include both historical and contemporary American views of early learning as reflected by government funding, early learning and teacher education field practices, professionalization of early childhood teachers and improvement of education departments, and public policy as manifested by teacher certification and accountability. The article suggests that with the hindsight gained from historical knowledge and a clear understanding of the factors that contribute to school readiness, we are better equipped to make the first goal of today's educational reform a reality—that all children in America start school ready to learn.

School readiness the preparedness of children to learn what schools expect or want them to learn is a cornerstone of today's education reforms. According to government studies, students are not entering school ready to learn in spite of education reforms that have been in place for over 10 years (Lewit & Baker, 1995). The concern over school readiness was brought to national attention by then-President George Bush and the state governors (which included then-Governor Bill Clinton) in 1991 through the America 2000 program (Lewit & Baker, 1995). America 2000, a federal initiative for K-12 education reform, identified as its first goal for the national agenda that by the year 2000 all children in America should start school ready to learn (Boyer, 1991). A recent survey conducted by the National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL) of 3,600 teachers nationwide reported that 52% of children have a successful entry into kindergarten and 48% have moderate or serious problems ("Kindergarten Transitions," 1998).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1995) describes three

prerequisites for universal school readiness: "1. addressing the inequities in early life experience so that all children have access to the opportunities that promote school success; 2. recognizing and supporting individual differences among children including linguistic and cultural differences; and 3. establishing reasonable and appropriate expectations of children's capabilities upon school entry." (These prerequisites are based on what is developmentally appropriate for children and therefore do not include mastery of numbers, shapes, and letters.) While family characteristics, nutrition, and health practices have been identified as primary factors in school readiness, the level of readiness with which our children begin school is also influenced by several external societal factors. These include our nation's historical and contemporary approaches to early learning, early learning and teacher education field practices, reforms to improve education departments and professionalize early childhood teachers, as well as public policy concerning certification of teachers and accountability. This article presents a brief overview of these key public issues (excluding family characteristics, nutrition, and health practices) that contribute to school readiness.

Historical and Contemporary Approaches to Early Learning: Government Funding as a Mirror

The colonial tradition of keeping young children at home remained prevalent in the United States until World War II, with the brief exception of the short-lived infant school movement that began in 1828. However, during the 1940s, when mothers were needed to work in defense industries, government became involved in child care. The Lanaham Act (1943) created federally sponsored child care centers that allowed mothers to work during the war. These centers remained in operation until after the war to provide jobs for the vast numbers of unemployed teachers, social workers, and nurses. Thus, the support of child care by the government was strictly "an answer to a war problem" (Cahan, 1989, p. 43). From the 1950s through the 1990s, government-sponsored day care continued as a social welfare system to strengthen the family life of the poor and to move people from welfare to work. In contrast, private early learning programs for those who can afford them emphasize education gains for children and research-based parenting resources for families.

The historical view of early learning as a family responsibility is evident today in less-than-adequate government support of child care services. Certain early intervention programs, such as Head Start and High Scope, measurably benefit targeted children and families, and they have generated savings to the government that exceed the costs of the programs (Karoly et al., 1998).

The cost savings that result from these and other similar programs are long-term gains that are actualized when the children have graduated from high school, and they and their caretakers become productive, employed members of society (Karoly et al., 1998). Whether or not the public will continue to support programs whose gains are so delayed is yet to be determined. In 1991, because of a lack of federal funding, only one-third of all children eligible for Head Start received services (Boyer, 1991). And in 1996, the Welfare Reform Law increased the demand for full-time child care services in every state (Center for the Child Care Workforce, 1998) without providing resources to meet the needs of all "at-risk" children.

When the much-needed federal funding was appropriated, however, Head Start enrollment statistics did not change perhaps due to the need for full-time day care as opposed to half-day programs. In 1998, approximately one-third of eligible children were enrolled in Head Start (Kirchhoff, 1998), and the program was criticized for not reaching more families and for qualitative weakness in the areas of curriculum and teacher training. The Clinton Administration is addressing these issues and has allocated

funding to meet its goal of enrolling 1 million children by the year 2002. The bulk of the new Head Start funding is for qualitative improvements, such as teacher training (Kirchhoff, 1998). But how much spending is enough and where should the money be invested?

A comparison of public spending on early learning programs in the United States with other similarly developed countries indicates that the United States has more resources for providing educational services yet provides fewer (Svestka, 1995). For example, France provides free schooling beginning at age 3. French preschool teachers hold the equivalent of a master's degree in early childhood development, and students of preschool education receive a stipend and free college education if they agree to teach for 5 years. In Belgium, all 4-year-olds and 95% of 3-year-olds are in public schools; in Italy, 87% of 3- to 5-year-olds are in school. The figures are almost identical for Spain, Hong Kong, and [West] Germany (Hymes, 1991). And in Denmark, the government subsidizes child care for children from 6 months to age 7, with trained professional teachers in each classroom and low child-to-teacher ratios. The quality of care is reported as uniformly high (Congressional Quarterly, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c).

Not everyone agrees that government should be more involved. Some conservative groups believe the current child care system in the United States is adequate. For example, the Cato Institute released a report calling for Congress to resist increasing funding for child care and not to impose federal standards (Olsen, 1997). In addressing the cost issue, the Cato Institute points to a national survey indicating that 96% of parents are satisfied with their child care arrangements, parent costs for child care have risen less than 5% since 1970, and the supply of child care has kept up with the demand. Unfortunately, the cost of early childhood programs is often subsidized by staff accepting low wages and not receiving benefits they might receive in other jobs (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). In responding to the regulatory issues, the Cato Institute argues that parents can distinguish between low- and high-quality care and that while regulations and standards do not guarantee excellence, national standards would abrogate parental care-taking responsibility (Olsen, 1997). However, research conducted by the Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team (1995) indicates that selecting high-quality care is an issue of access and availability and not a question of parental judgment.

Early Learning and Teacher Education Field Practices

Research on early learning indicates that (1) early experience has lasting effects, (2) early childhood is the critical period of neurological development, (3) all children enter early childhood programs with active minds, and (4) early childhood is the critical period in social development (Katz, 1997). Because of these conclusions, school readiness has been identified as the highest priority of education reform.

Studies over the past three decades have also shown that good, research-based early learning programs enhance later achievement and social adjustment, reduce the likelihood of retention, increase graduation rates, and reduce placement in special needs classes (Barnett, 1995; Entwisle, 1995). But the actual quality of preschool education in the United States is mixed at best.

Current national research shows that of every 10 center-based programs, 2 provide high-quality care, 7 provide mediocre care, and 1 jeopardizes the health and safety of children (Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Kagan & Cohen, 1997). At the same time that the nation has identified school readiness as a problem, the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in nursery schools has reached 48% (Chagani, 1996). Nursery schools are governed by the same standards as preschool programs; however, nursery schools typically have a lower staff turnover rate and provide better compensation for teachers because of their part-time schedule and the cost savings resulting from no provision of benefits.

Through better opportunities for field placement, improved early learning programs could help preschool teacher education as well as children. A broad base of research indicates that effective practices in early learning programs include frequent verbal and educational interactions between teacher and child, teacher training that is balanced in child development, and some degree of professional teaching experience in early learning programs (Clarke-Stewart, 1987). Many researchers have identified student teaching during the practicum experience as the most valuable aspect of teacher education programs (McLanahan, 1992). Increased access to high-caliber early learning programs for field practices is required to improve student teaching experiences (Chagani, 1996). Another study points to the importance of consistency in the early learning workforce and retention of teachers through better training and appropriate compensation (Center for the Child Care Workforce, 1998). The low percentage (20%) of good to excellent early learning programs available to children (Kagan & Cohen, 1997) and the high percentage (48%) of children entering kindergarten who are determined by their teachers to be underprepared for school (Chagani, 1996) suggest that improving field practices could have a major impact on young children's preparedness to start school.

Reforms: Professionalizing Early Childhood Teachers and Improving Education Departments

Among the remedies for improving the quality of early learning programs, excellent training and appropriate compensation for teachers is crucial (Katz, 1997). However, child care workers are among the lower paid of all classes of workers in the United States (NCEDL, 1997). Although research shows that there is a positive relationship between the education and consistency of staff and the quality of care, only a small percentage of child care teachers have four-year or advanced degrees, and the staff turnover rate is as high as 25% to 50% per year (NCEDL, 1997). But a new development is changing these conditions. When preschool programs are part of public schools, preschool teachers have the same certification requirements as K-12 teachers and are perceived to have the important responsibility of preparing their students for success within the school system (Goffin & Day, 1994). In 1991, 15% of all school districts offered classes for 4-year-olds in American public schools (Boyer, 1991). According to the Children's Defense Fund, 21 states increased aid for pre-kindergarten or Head Start in 1997 (Kirchhoff, 1998). Edward Zigler, director of the Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University, reported that 30-31 states now have some form of pre-kindergarten program as compared to 1980, when there were only 10 states with pre-kindergarten initiatives (Coeyman, 1998). As this number continues to rise, so will the demand for highly skilled early childhood graduates capable of passing state teaching certification exams. Laws such as the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1998 (Report 05-750), which offers loan forgiveness for child care providers, contribute to the professionalization of preschool teachers.

University and college education departments, often overshadowed by other departments that require specialized technological skills, have responded to education reform by raising admission standards in hopes of attracting better-qualified students and thereby increasing the departments' status within colleges and universities (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990, Clifford & Guthrie, 1988). But in order to attain true educational reform, not only must standards be raised for students training to be teachers, but standards must also be raised for the teachers who are providing the training (Lively, 1998). The revitalization of teacher education requires a simultaneous revival of schools as places where teachers are taught, because teachers teach as they were taught in schools and colleges and pass their ways along to their students (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990; Goffin & Day, 1994). Thus, a thorough exploration

of traditional models for training early childhood teachers practiced in colleges and universities today is needed to evaluate their congruence with research-based teaching practices that foster school readiness.

Public Policy: Certification of Teachers and Accountability

Public policy, the driving force of funding and regulations for all levels of education (Karoly et al., 1998), is yet another factor that has a critical impact on both school readiness and teacher training. Public policy is created when problems, policies, and politics come together at the right time (Kingdon, 1995). One problem that is currently driving public policy is the debate over teacher certification. For early childhood teachers, teacher certification may well be another step toward professionalizing the field. More-qualified and better-paid teachers would certainly enhance the learning opportunities for children.

Of course, not all states require teachers to pass certification exams. In 1997, six states did not use a test for teacher licensing and had no plans to do so in the near future (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 1998). And states that require teacher exams vary considerably in teacher licensure standards. States establish individual standards for licensure test passing cutoff points, their choice of tests (if any), their test re-take policy, and which states' teacher licensures they recognize (Gitomer, Latham, & Ziomek, 1999). Even states that use the same teacher test have different standards. For example, the passing scores established for the Early Childhood Education Praxis exams by 15 states showed a 120-point range of scores, with the lowest acceptable passing score of 480 for Ohio and the highest acceptable passing score of 600 for both Florida and Oregon. Based on 6,804 examinees, the average test performance range is 600-700 (Educational Testing Service, 1998-1999). The lowest score within the average performance range is the same as the highest cutoff score and 120 points more than the lowest acceptable cutoff score. These results could indicate that the exam is extremely challenging and therefore requires a low cutoff score or that the exam is not challenging enough based on the high average passage rates.

Despite the lack of consistency in selection, application, and interpretation of tests across institutes and state certification agencies, some local governments and the media have used low passage rates to portray teachers as incompetent. As a result, schools of education have lost credibility nationally and are in danger of losing their own certification if their rates of students passing the certification tests do not improve (Lively, 1998). Higher education is challenged to provide early childhood teacher training models that will (1) enable students to pass teacher certification exams, (2) provide students with the skills needed to foster school readiness in preschool children, and (3) work collaboratively and closely with local early childhood programs to increase the quality of care for children and to help shape public perception of early childhood teachers as professionals.

Teachers of questionable academic ability, a shortage of teacher candidates, a high turnover rate, a predominately white female population, and use of state emergency licensing procedures to fill the vacancy gaps all these characterize current K-12 teaching conditions (Gitomer, Latham, & Ziomek, 1999). To a great extent, these characteristics are true for pre-kindergarten teaching today as well, although, because certification is not required and financial compensation is low in nonpublic school nursery and preschool programs, job turnover rates are greater and teachers' academic ability is more questionable.

As an accountability measure, Congress approved legislation requiring state reporting of teacher licensure exams from individual institutions, as well as comparative descriptions of teacher licensure

assessments, state passing scores, and the pass rate and rank by institution (Otuya, 1998). Although it seems simple, the reporting task is complex because of the individual authority of each state and institution. Because procedures and exams vary by state as well as by institution, standardized definitions and uniform reporting methods will be crucial to understanding the reports (Gitomer, Latham, & Ziomek, 1999). During this period of demand for accountability, a full review of the literature on teacher certification exams and outcomes is needed to understand the success of traditional early learning programs in providing graduates who pass state certification exams and thus contribute to the increasing professionalization of early learning teachers.

Certification of teachers is the area of higher education in which the state has the greatest control (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990). Because there is a wide disparity between the academic skills and knowledge required of teachers in content areas and those in elementary or early childhood education, when approaching issues that refer to teachers, it is important to identify which group of teachers is being referenced. Moreover, because the policies and licensure procedures vary widely from state to state, in addressing teacher licensure issues, it is crucial to ground the discussion within the context of individual states. Review of the certification literature would provide a lens to look at public policy from both ends of the educational spectrum early childhood schooling and college-level teacher training.

Summary

By examining the historical and contemporary American views of early learning, early learning field practices, teacher training programs, and public policy around early learning and teacher training, we are better equipped to make the cornerstone of today's educational reform a reality. Identifying the factors that are congruent and working well now will allow for the continued development of these areas when the public agenda shifts. Evidence suggests that traditional early learning teacher training programs in colleges of education do produce teachers who are successful in passing state licensure examinations, but the typical cutoff score is very low. Although research has defined characteristics of high-quality early learning programs, successful teacher training modules exist, and vehicles for professionalizing the field are in place, our society settles for preschool teachers who will work under poor conditions for minimum pay. Additional research is needed to determine how to best utilize the resources of higher education, local communities, and the state and federal government to ensure high-quality early learning for all children and to change the current climate of low standards and rewards for early childhood teachers (Karoly et al., 1998).

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The School Bus Project

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Abstract

A preschool class of 4- and 5-year-old children in a midwestern Christian school chose to study school buses as a class project. This article discusses the goals of the project; describes the three phases of the project, including the children's representation of parts of the bus; provides the teacher's reflections on the project; and presents parents' comments on the project. The article also contains a memory book that documents the project using photographs.

School and Student Background Information

Our preschool is part of a pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade midwestern Christian school, with roots in the Christian Reformed Church. The church advocates Christian education but does not operate the Christian schools. Our school is owned and directed by members of the Timothy Christian School Society, which is composed of parents of children attending the school and parents of former students. Parents of four children in the class involved in the school bus project were School Society members.

The class working on the project was one of four preschool classes at the school. This class met three mornings a week from 9:30 to 11:30 and was taught by Deb Lanenga and me. We chose this class for the project because Deb could help with videotaping the project activities. The children in the class came from middle- or upper-middle-class families. There were 13 children in the class: three 5-year-old girls, four 4-year-old girls, two 5-year-old boys, and four 4-year-old boys. Nine of the children were in our preschool the previous year, but not all were in the same group. Two of the boys came from homes where two languages were spoken. One girl was diagnosed as a selective mute the previous year, a result of a rare medical condition that had killed her sibling. One boy, whose mother remarried during the summer, showed some changes in attitude and behavior.

Project Background

Thinking about project topics the previous summer, I had been drawn to school buses because our school maintains its own bus fleet and maintenance facility. I knew we would be able to visit the site on foot as frequently as necessary, and the visits would not affect our limit of two field trips a year imposed by the school board for financial reasons. Our bus maintenance supervisor is child friendly, easygoing, willing to help, and open to answering questions, and some of our bus drivers are parents of students or former students who are also respected, helpful, and child friendly.

To see if children would be attracted to or curious about buses, we played several times in the playground area that borders the fence of the bus yard instead of using a closer area. One day in early September, John remarked that there must be about 19 or 100 buses in the bus parking area. Other children made less-spectacular guesses. And so a question was raised, a reason to investigate was provided, and the bus project was launched. (Interest would be further piqued in October when we would travel to the woods in a school bus—excitement about going in a bus usually matched the excitement about our destination.)

Project Goals

We hoped that through working on the school bus project, we could help the children reach a number of different social, academic, physical, and artistic goals. We hoped that the children would have an opportunity to:

- develop skill representing details of what they saw;
- develop their ability to work together toward a goal;
- solve problems together;
- learn how to investigate, ask questions, and gain a greater understanding of their chosen part of the bus; and
- learn to act safely in and around school buses.

Phase 1

Activities

I began Phase 1 by telling stories about my parents taking me on a bus when I was a child because we had no car and later, when I went to school, the teacher taking the class to special places on school buses.

Children were asked to relate any experiences they had had on buses. Amy denied ever taking a bus, although she had been on two field trips with our preschool the previous year. As the conversation continued, she talked about going on Lake Shore Drive in a car or on a little bus, remembering that her mother had difficulty putting the stroller on the bus. Mandy and Nora told about field trip excursions from the previous year. Shawn began talking about going on a bus and seeing dinosaurs. Shawn would

talk about dinosaurs at the slightest provocation, and because his English was sometimes unclear, I was not sure if he meant a Chicago or a Pakistani bus. Susan had been on a field trip with us the previous year but did not respond.

After our class meeting, the children were invited to draw, paint, or construct a school bus. Paintings and drawings were simple; most children made several windows and wheels, painting or drawing the body yellow. Donny, whose drawings the previous year were reluctant and scribbled, made an object with multiple shapes and with two straight lines beneath it. Amy commented that Donny didn't have O's for wheels. Stories were dictated and added to the drawings.

The next day, clay was made available for children to sculpt buses. Three children made three-dimensional objects with four wheels. Mandy made a flat-bodied bus with five wheels. She opted not to paint hers. Nora squeezed the clay. Donny chose to try painting a box with yellow and black but did not finish the construction.

At our next meeting, we created a school bus web. Children listed all the things they could think of associated with buses, including a nonexistent CD player. During the following session, they grouped objects that they felt belonged together, made a list of questions that they wanted answered, and selected what they wanted to investigate. Children tended to choose topics to investigate that they had mentioned in our original webbing exercise.

To conclude this phase, we discussed making an appointment with Mr. Bonnes, the bus maintenance supervisor, to visit the bus barn. Patty volunteered to make the request, so we walked to the bus barn and set a date for the visit.

In preparation for our first site visit, I asked for parent volunteers and sixth-grade student helpers. I also noted each child's questions and choice of bus part to study on his or her clipboard and talked to Mr. Bonnes about the children's questions. He asked if he could take the children for a ride around campus, and so in class I "wondered" if Mr. Bonnes would take us for a ride. The children responded that they would like that, and they wanted to ask him. Jessica volunteered to politely ask Mr. Bonnes.

Reflections on Phase 1

In thinking about the first phase of the project, I realized that there were several things I would have done differently. For example, my stories drew Shawn's attention to going places rather than to his experience with buses. I should have started with the story of my children being picked up by a school bus with lights flashing, rather than telling it later.

Another problem, for me at least, was my discomfort with the videotaping. Although the children seemed to be completely unaffected by the video camera, I was apprehensive, felt that my every word was stilted and unnatural, and felt that every move I made was large and wrong. I found myself offering questions a little too quickly to help Mandy solve her difficulty describing where children sat in the bus. She said the seats were on the outside, but she meant on either side of the aisle on the inside. I leaped in too quickly to help her.

I think I should also have done the webbing in one short session; it dragged on a bit long. I could have asked the children which parts of the bus they wanted to look at during a less formal time or individually. This process might also go faster later in the year, when children would be more

comfortable with each other and would understand the routine and expectations of the teachers.

I also discovered that it is not a good idea to display sculptures on the rear of a table where 3-year-olds can stretch to investigate and possibly damage things. Mandy's bus wheels were crumpled.

Phase 2

Field Experience

On Wednesday, two moms and five sixth-graders joined us for our first visit to the bus yard. Each parent or sixth-grade volunteer had one or two children to help. We arrived at the bus barn with clipboards and pencils. Jessica asked if we could have a ride on the bus, and Mr. Bonnes said, "Sure." After he gave some rules for the bus barn and asked the children to find Bus 18, we were off. We were treated to a bumpy ride around the campus with no little heads visible above the seats—just sixth-graders', teachers', and parents' heads.

The children continued their journey to learning by asking questions and by sketching their chosen parts of the bus.

Paul's sixth-grade helper, Luke, who evidenced a sense of humor when he arrived at our room, helped Paul see the lines on the side of the bus, took his pencil now and then to help him finish drawing side lines, added "Timothy Christian School," and graded his paper with an A++. I had explained carefully what to look at and had told Luke that Paul's attention might wander. He did keep Paul focused and interested, and he took his job of helping Paul seriously.

Jorie looked at a side wheel and discovered lug nuts. Her drawing had good detail.

Jessica intently studied the rear of the bus, her helper occasionally helping her focus on details of light placement.

Nora and Amy worked on counting seats, each using her own method—Nora tallied while Amy counted and put down the number 25. Nora drew the driver's seat, Amy a child's bench.

Michael asked Mr. Bonnes about the CD player and discovered there was none. So he and John drew the two-way radio and counted side windows.

Mandy, standing with her mom in front of the bus, cried. She had asked to learn about the front of the bus and its lights, but her drawing shows only an outline and a mirror, which may have had more than a little adult help.

Ashley's work was somewhat puzzling—groups of circles only.

Donny sat in the driver's seat with pure pleasure, pretended to drive, and drew the steering wheel. Ryan, too, smiled with eyes twinkling as he "drove" the bus and drew the windshield. Shawn drew the driver's window—without a dinosaur.

We experienced some frustrating delays getting back for a second visit. Schoolwide preventative lice checks and student pictures consumed two days, and the bus yard was unsafe on a third day because

buses were being sold.

For the second site visit, we divided the class in half. Some of the children completed Time II drawings (Note 1), and others sketched a second part of the bus. All the children completed texture rubbings.

To make perspective sketching attainable for Mandy, I asked her if she would like to draw the side of the bus this time, which she did easily. She counted the 12 windows but did not accurately represent them, running out of room, then adding too many on the upper additional row.

Susan, who was absent for the first site visit, drew the stop sign, doing a Time II sketch later from a photograph.

Jorie's Time II sketch shows much growth in attending to detail. Mandy had no difficulty doing a second drawing of the bus side later in the classroom. Each time she experimented with the side drawing, even in another medium, it became better in amount and accuracy of detail. Nora's seat also showed more-confident pencil strokes, and the drawing appeared to have had less adult help with the perspective.

John tried drawing the front of the bus and so did Amy, who chose to draw the front of the bus rather than work on a Time II drawing. Her drawing was very detailed, but she missed the windshield. She noticed license plate numbers and drew in the colors of the lights.

Jessica went by herself behind the bus and sketched, finishing quickly. Her window shapes were not rectangular, but her lights were accurately colored.

We gave Ashley an outline to give her drawing a starting shape. Her lights were less random.

Reflections on Our Field Experience

When I planned our field trip, I had been apprehensive about taking sixth-graders along. Although they acted a bit silly as I described how they were to help, once paired with preschoolers they worked to put their companions at ease, boarded the bus with appropriate good humor, and worked seriously to help their charges meet their goals. This experiment worked very well, and I would not hesitate to pair up helpers with children again. I had been reluctant to ask for their time, but as we proceeded, I found teachers most willing to let older children help. The older children took the work seriously and did it well. High school advanced woods students also came in that week and pitched in eagerly and purposefully. Paul's sixth-grade helper kept him involved with the one-on-one attention even though people were walking around him. I noted that he needed one-on-one help in the class and careful instructions.

In the future, however, I will give more-specific instructions to parent and older children helpers without preschoolers present to help the volunteers understand how much to help preschoolers sketch. Some of the Time I drawings had lines that were too firmly drawn compared to those done on the next unaccompanied visit.

The time-wasting head lice checks, unpredictable class picture taking, and the bus selling interfered with my documenting the project and coordinating with the other teachers. I had wanted to discuss planning, teaching, and schedules with them. I wanted to know whether I was adequately explaining my

expectations and objectives for this new process. In the future, I will keep children working in the classroom, let the documentation fall into place later, and keep talking with my colleagues.

Representation

Most children worked on representing what they had drawn using other media such as paint and blocks.

To represent her stop sign, Susan chose paper, pencil, and red construction board. After gathering her materials, she quietly said with head down, "I need help." Questioning by the teacher helped her figure out the shapes, and Mandy offered to help her cut the construction board. They discussed with very few words and a few motions how to proceed. Susan then tackled gluing the pieces together by drizzling puddles along the edge of her smaller piece. Surprisingly, the construction held together.

Ashley chose red paper and red paint to make red lights and yellow paper and yellow paint to make yellow lights. At that time, she had not made the white lights nor checked the number of lights to see if she had enough.

Amy's vision for constructing a bus was to use boxes to sit in. Most of the children understood her to mean using boxes for the seats, and so Nora's mother and uncles made reinforced boxes strong enough for children to sit on. Amy gathered a large box from our collection and drew a grille and top flashing lights on it. Donny joined her in painting, put the top flaps down like the engine hood, and painted them. Amy was upset when she realized that these needed "to be scrunched down so the teacher could sit in there" because she had already drawn the steering wheel inside the box. She had not drawn a windshield in her sketch, and it took a discussion with Donny about motors and hoods and windows for her to understand what was needed. Just as he was suggesting she add a piece of board above her motor, she suddenly motioned him away and said, "I get it. I get it." I was happy she made the change—I could see myself sitting with my chin on my knees in that motor!

Mandy took a 4 ft. x 8 ft. piece of cardboard and drew a 3 ft. bus side complete with many accurate-looking windows and a door. Her mother was amazed: "Wow, Mandy did that all by herself?" Michael and John took another 4 ft. x 8 ft. piece of cardboard and made their side of the bus completely fill the board. Michael wrote "18" on it ("I know that number, I can do it."), and John copied "Timothy Christian School" from a photo (having trouble with the R).

Mandy looked at the two sides, took another 4 ft. x 8 ft. piece, and made a side to match the size of the boys' side. She did it easily, not looking at the boys' side, counted the windows to 11, and then said, "There's one left—*uno*, teacher, *uno*—that's one in Spanish."

Donny helped everyone paint, did it carefully, wanted to be in on all work, tried every type of painting implement offered, and evaluated Jessica's painting as messy. When he was asked to explain how it was messy, he said, "She don't have the wheels on," and on a second day, he commented again that her painting was messy. He drew his steering wheel, but seemed to have trouble starting, so I asked what shape the steering wheel was. He said "Round, but I don't know how to make the bumps (the places where the fingers fit). He decided to ignore the bumps and forged ahead. He found a tube in the room to use for the steering column.

Although Jorie carefully studied the wheels as she sketched and her Time II drawing is excellent, her first representation contained many circles. Mr. Bonnes, the maintenance supervisor, brought in a tire

rim and separate tire so that Jorie could feel and see the separateness of the parts. We returned to the bus barn to examine a wheel to help her understand that the wheel is permanently on the bus, the rim and tire attached to it with wedges and lug nuts. Her final marker and paint representations are more accurate but not as accurate as her second sketch.

Kindergartners who were passing by commented: "That's a great bus, but it's not ready to play in yet. It needs the windows cut out so you can play." John and Michael said they would like the windows open, so my husband cut them out.

Interest lagged the second week of October. We had a field trip to the woods that took another day. Painting kept a small core of children busy. In small groups at snack time, children listed more questions—questions with "how" and "why" this time, and on October 19, Carol, a bus driver, pulled up in a bus to answer questions. Interest gained momentum on October 21 as our bus looked almost ready to use. Almost everyone painted that day—most children ending up with yellow knees. We returned to Mr. Bonnes to have our newest questions answered. I filled him in on the teacher-sitting-in-the-motor dilemma and other new questions in the morning so that when we arrived, the bus was sitting with its hood up ready to be examined. Mr. Bonnes asked us where the driver sat and asked what would happen if we tried to sit in front of the glass. Some of the children felt more at ease with the hood down, the inner workings being a bit strange. He also showed us the "electric" part of the bus.

Because the children decided on wood and nails to put the bus together, I asked them to measure the sides so we could figure out how long the wood should be. John said we should use a tape measure and that his dad had one. No one could suggest an alternative, nor could the kindergartners passing by give us a useable idea for measuring. One suggested using scotch tape and putting little numbers on it. I told the children how my husband measured in the garden, and so we ended up with a back of the bus that is 7 of Nora's feet and a side that is 11 of Donny's feet.

The industrial arts instructor at the high school developed a plan to put the bus together and sent Matthew, a high school carpentry student, to demonstrate how to pound nails. Armed with goggles, roofing nails, and light hammers, the children gathered. There was much pounding. Paul came right over and worked about 15 minutes. Donny worked the whole hour. Michael and John, who liked to be involved in pretend play together, worked about 20 minutes, both returning at separate times. Everyone but Ashley and Susan participated.

Donny put his steering wheel together with tape and said, "Now we need the things for the feet—the pedals."

On Wednesday, October 28, Nora, Jorie, Donny, Amy, and Paul arrived, took up hammers, and got to work. Unfortunately, the high school carpentry student was not able to come to screw the wood pieces together, but we needed time to measure and plan a place for the benches or seats in the bus. Deb Lanenga and I held the front and a side so the children would figure out how to construct the seats. They agreed on a child's chair for the bus driver. Donny got his steering wheel, but it stretched above the center of the window. The problem was diagnosed immediately—the chair was too low. They thought the solution was to add steel-legged chairs on top of each other until the chairs were three high. This strategy seemed to work until someone arrived with a wooden chair to make the stack even higher. At this point, a teacher intervened saying that this solution was not safe. (The chairs did tip with a little help at the right moment.) I was going to suggest hunting for a bigger chair, when suddenly there were children descending upon the yellow object like ants. Neither of us could reach camera or video camera because our hands were filled with bus sides. Two children moved to the hallway to bring in the motors and fenders. The kindergarten teacher helped Patty place the motor, grabbing the video camera as bus

seats were coming through the bus door with smiling children. The bus stop yielded a more-than-full bus, and Ashley asked, "Where are my lights?"

Donny asked for glass for the front window. I told him that glass was too dangerous and asked him if he had any ideas for something like glass. Amy suggested invisible paper. I said that I didn't have any but asked if any of their mothers used something to cover bowls that you could see through? Amy said, "My mom covers her bowls with that foil stuff." Later in the day, she asked if I had any of that foil stuff for the windows. I told her that you couldn't see through foil. She asked, "What stuff do you cover your bowls with?" I responded, "Saran Wrap or foil." She asked if that other stuff was invisible." I assured her you could see through it and in response to her request, I promised to bring some to school. I also thought I heard Donny say he needed keys for the bus.

When all the passengers boarded the bus, Paul wanted to be the driver and of course Donny already occupied that place—so the social learning began.

Donny was still upset with the height of his chair. When the children were asked what else Donny could do to solve the problem, Patty suggested cutting the tube or column supporting his steering wheel to make it lower.

I thought that on Friday we would be able to finish the bus—with screws and stop signs and nonflashing "flashing" lights (if Donny didn't think of more things to add). The children could then play school bus and maybe school too. I thought I would try to have the firemen come soon so we could look at another vehicle.

We did put the bus together on Friday. Our high school student could not come to drill, but the kindergarten teacher helped us instead. The children were quiet, relaxed, and unexcited until the screws went in. Amy and Susan—creators of the front and rear—went to the hall during snack time to glue on Amy's license plates. While Deb and I were videotaping and taking still pictures, the children decided to make a roof for the bus. Extra pieces of cardboard were in the room, and when we returned, the children had put them on the top of the bus. Nora's uncles had sent the cardboard for bus seats, but the children were happy with reinforced boxes to sit on—so now we had a roof. Patty was one of the bodies scurrying to her snack when we returned, and she was the body whose arms reached up through the bus during the first sitting to say, "Now we need a roof."

Reflections on Representation

One child's painting and drawing indicated she needed help with visual motor coordination. She also seemed to need very specific instructions. She took a long time to respond to questions or statements. I thought that perhaps she had some language-processing problems. I planned on asking for permission to have our learning abilities teacher observe her.

Donny was persistent and observant, asked good questions, was a careful worker, and wanted others to do their work well too. His coordination improved every day. He saw details and solved problems. He had come a long way from the shy, uninvolved child we had in class the previous year.

Jessica preferred to work by herself. She did not like doing things over, and when she decided her work was complete, she considered the task finished. She took pride in what she did. When she worked with her sixth-grade helper Lora, her sketching was excellent, but when she worked by herself, her Time II

sketch of bus window rectangles got a lopsided look. Her paintings—with the large movements and messier medium—are also more lopsided. I thought it would be interesting to see how she viewed the door to the bus when it was cut to use.

Susan talked to the video camera and smiled widely as she demonstrated her stop sign. She began to play with noisy, fun-loving Patty, who would look for her regularly.

Patty lost interest in the project until Wednesday, October 21, and Monday, October 26. She painted and pounded and became absorbed in the pounding.

It was rewarding to see the excitement of the children and my colleagues once the bus started taking shape. The kindergarten teacher said she felt like breaking into a chorus of the "Wheels on the Bus"—which the children had completed before she arrived.

The quietness on Friday surprised me, but it made sense—a relaxation after a month of hard work. Donny's whining surprised me, too, but in retrospect made sense also. His sense of purpose was gone for the moment until the bus was screwed together and he got to play and be the first driver. Paul, who also wanted to be first and in control, said to him, "Here's the keys" (pretend of course).

By Tuesday, four preschool classes had played in the bus. They were respecting it, playing carefully and with joy. One mom from another class volunteered to bring a camera to take her daughter's picture behind the wheel.

Phase 3

Planning a Celebration

On October 21, the children agreed that they would like to have a party to celebrate their bus project with their parents and sing the "Wheels on the Bus."

The children agreed to serve milk and cookies shaped like wheels. Michael suggested putting chocolate chips in the center of the cookies to represent lug nuts. On Monday, October 26, we asked how many cookies we should have, and one child responded 100, another said 10, another 15, then a chorus of 100s erupted. They decided to count how many children we had (13), and Deb Lanenga said she would like a cookie too and so would Mrs. Harkema, which brought the total to 15. Mr. Harkema walked in and said he would like one too, so we were up to 16. We wondered whether that number was going to be enough. The children responded with a resounding "No!" and said that they would need cookies for their moms and dads. Amy said her baby sister didn't have teeth so she wouldn't need one, but Ashley said her baby did have teeth. John said, "I know, we can go home and count our moms and dads." So they had homework (How many people are coming to our party?) and an idea for party invitations.

An informal poll of parents by the teachers showed that Monday, November 2, at 7:00 p.m. would be the best time for our party. John had an idea for the cover of the invitations—"School Bus Party"—and dictated what he thought should be typed on the inside: "Where: Timothy Christian Preschool Room. Come at 7:00 at night."

On October 28, children tallied the number of parents and decided to have chairs for the guests while the children sang and explained what they learned. We planned on decorating our cookies on Monday

and reviewing what we learned.

We did make the cookies on Monday (with chocolate frosting to hold on six lug nuts). We also reviewed the "Wheels on the Bus," and Ashley spontaneously sang a needed ending to the line "the guard on the bus goes . . . in and out."

I was about to tell Donny how I felt about his participation in the project, but I backed off and asked him how he thought he did his work on the bus—how he felt about it. He said, "I did good."

All but one family came to the celebration, including parents and siblings. Several parents I had not met before came, including a father in a wheelchair who had just flown in from out of state.

They asked questions, looked at bus parts their children pointed out, got in the bus, and studied the picture display. A mom said she thought the memory book, which contained photographs documenting the project, would be good for children to look at and to learn from. Parents also enjoyed the lug nuts on the cookies.

Reflections on Phase 3

Preparing for the celebration was enjoyable for the children. Amy put down a mark for baby Elizabeth, teeth or no teeth. She had no trouble counting all the tally marks to come up with the 46 cookies needed. Moms asked if they could bring something or help.

I prepared the memory book the week before our bus party with the parents. I started the memory book by scanning the photos, but I did not realize how time-consuming this process was. There was no one to answer my questions on the weekend and so I had text and photos color copied at a local photocopying store. This procedure was expensive, so I made one copy for the party, which we later distributed to parents on an overnight basis.

We were pleased to see so many complete families on a Monday night. All the children's siblings were there. Before looking at the bulletin board and obviously not having heard all the stories of construction from their children, some dads were curious about the ideas for the carpentry. They obviously had not checked the condition of the nails or entry places carefully, because the children deserved full credit for that. The "who framed it" question made sense. Unfortunately, Mr. Senti, the industrial arts teacher, had never been seen by the children. They had decided to use wood to put the bus together but had no idea how to build it, and neither had I. I had hoped we would see him develop the plan, but his free times and their school time did not mesh. He cut our wood and drew lines for placement. Matthew, his student, showed the children how and where to nail. The children did the rest. (Later, I must admit, my husband did some reinforcement with a staple gun.) Children also learned about safety goggles for hammering. Parents were pleased with their children's work, followed their children's interests in the new photographs, and enjoyed the bus itself. Some studied the bulletin board we had prepared, but more watched the video. For community building, improving parent-teacher relationships, and encouraging interest in their children, the evening was well worth the time and effort spent by all of us.

Parent Comments

After the project was completed, I sent a note home asking parents how they felt about their children's involvement in the bus project. The following notes indicate their positive reactions:

> *The Bus Project is one that I know my child will remember and take pride in for many years! He got very involved in the project: "My favorite part to make was the steering wheel," he said. It was a team effort, a fun and memorable way to learn to work together! The party was nice—so the kids could share and be proud with us as parents.*

> *I think that the children had a sense of "ownership" with this project. They seemed very serious about it, and I really think they felt they were truly contributing something to the classroom. My daughter would point out buses, large and small, on our way to school, and she still points them out, as if she has a connection to them. Perhaps it's because she has a good understanding of how they work. I thought the bus party was a special way to celebrate their work on the project. It's always fun for the parents to see what their kids are doing in school.*

The following note was interesting because the child chose not to participate after she drew a door until we began hammering. It was her idea to add the roof and cut down the steering column. But, unfortunately, those activities were not included in the memory book.

> *My daughter and I reviewed the school bus memory book and discussed her involvement in the project. She appeared excited about the project and recalled several details about the bus. I was surprised that she did not recall her involvement in creating the details of the bus, such as drawing the windows, doors, or wheels. I believe she was looking for pictures of herself in the book to help her remember what she had done on the project. I do recall her talking about the bus all the time after the project was completed. I think that the children did an awesome job on the project. They appeared to be very interested and very involved in creating this bus. . . .*

Another parent commented:

> *For the classmates, working on the project was an opportunity for the children to learn how important it is to put their ideas, efforts, time, feelings, and thoughts together in order to build their confidence.*

Positive effects of the project were noted by another parent:

> *Looking back on the bus project, I think about how long it was. I see my son's ability to focus on such an in-depth project as a real positive learning. So much today is fast, over, done, and then on to the next thing. The hands-on experience he had will hopefully stick with him as a true appreciation for buses. Lastly, the pure size of the bus they made was awesome!*

Another father noted that it was an ambitious project and that he was surprised that the children could capture the details of the bus just by looking at it. I explained that we had spent a lot of time working on that aspect—that we had visited the bus several times, and that each child had drawn his or her part at least once and sometimes three or four times.

Reflections on the School Bus Project

There were a number of things I did not accomplish. Ideally, I would have had the children compare the

little buses with the big buses, write stories or narratives of what we had done, and make the words for the memory book. I had hoped to try a Venn diagram with the older children. The children had the data, and I should have done it while some of the children were painting, because later it was just too late—the children had already reached closure.

Through the bus project, I learned a lot about the technology available at school. The scanners and many of the computers, printers, video cameras, and equipment to edit videotape were all new to me. (The computer coordinator teased that I could help the Photoshop high school students with some of their problems.)

I learned that people are willing to help. Before, I always felt that I would be imposing. Sixth-graders, their teacher, the bus mechanic, the industrial arts instructor and his students, parents, the kindergarten teacher (who helped with videotaping and sharing ideas), the fifth-grade teacher, and the middle school teacher (who helped set up and advised on video editing) were all willing to help. A sense of community, support, and unselfish helpfulness are some of the attributes of our staff that I discovered through the bus project.

I also discovered that tape recorders were essential—not only to grab conversation when I was not available but also as a memory aid. I prefer the camera on the spot, but I found the video helpful in preparing this narrative. But to use both required that both teachers be in one place on occasion. I think I prefer to document with a camera—it's less time-consuming and shows the moment almost as quickly with the availability of 1-hour developing. Photos can also be held and used more easily with children.

Next time, I will take much less time for Phase 1 and get to the end of Phase 2 more quickly. The children's first webbing and representations were fine, and the field visits were good, but I need to avoid scheduling conflicts by checking the calendar for possible conflicts. A project scheduled later would not conflict with our adjusting to new children and their adjusting to us. Finishing Phase 2 would not necessarily mean a big production. These children chose to make a big bus (big cardboard had been donated), but we did not know it would be this big.

The play in the bus and sense of community that developed among the children were good: John and Michael; Jorie, Mandy, and Nora; Amy and Donny. Donny was a quiet force, challenging thinking. Amy was involved most of the time, contrary to last year. She is bright, needs to see that others have good ideas, and needs to be challenged. These things happened during the project. The project has been worthwhile for me and has been especially worthwhile for the children.

The School Bus Project Memory Book

Notes

1. Time I and Time II drawings are terms used to designate drawing the same object in sequence over time.

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Our School Bus Project
by
The MWF AM Class

We chose to study school buses because preschoolers look forward to riding on them during field trips; we had easy access to buses, mechanic, and bus drivers; and children see them when we go to the playground.

On one of our playground excursions, a child asked how many buses there were in the bus yard. John ventured a guess of 19 to 100. This gave us a reason to count the big yellow buses, take a closer look, and begin a bus study with the children.

My goals during this long-term project were to give children the opportunity to:

· Develop skill representing details of what they see.
· Develop their ability to work together toward a goal.
· Problem solve together.
· Learn how to investigate, ask questions, and gain a greater understanding of their chosen part of the bus.
· Learn to act safety in and around school buses.

At our first class meeting, several children and the teacher related their personal experiences on school buses and city buses. Children listed anything they knew about buses, then represented their memories in clay, drawing, and stories.

We visited the bus yard several times, doing our own investigations, and consulting with Mr. Bonnes, the bus maintenance supervisor.

As our bus took shape, children encountered difficulties with each others' points of view and how to make their ideas work. They learned to problem solve together and contributed additional suggestions for improving the bus.

Please share this Memory Book with your child. The yellow pages are for adults; the white pages tell our school bus story for the children.

Next

OUR SCHOOL BUS
PROJECT MEMORY BOOK

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THE MWF AM BUS CREW

Previous / Next

We drew, painted, and made sculptures
of buses before we went to look at them.

Previous / Next

Patty politely asked when we could come to see the buses.

Previous / Next

The sixth-graders rode on the bus with us and helped us find what we wanted to draw. They made sure we were safe in the driveway.

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The bus driver pushed one of these buttons to make the lights flash.

When he opened the door, the stop sign came out.

The yellow guard came out to keep children from walking in front of the bus.

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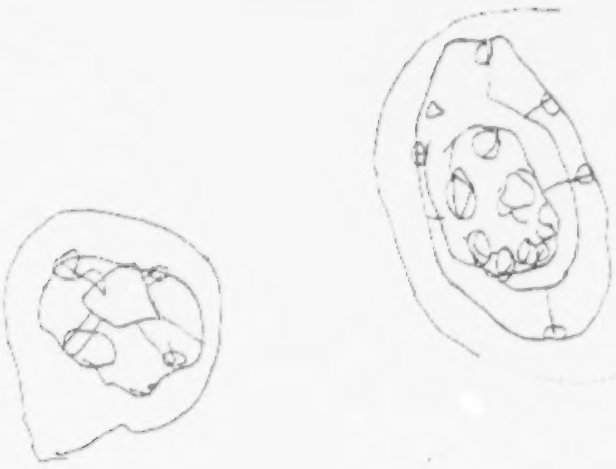
Repeated Sketching

Jorie's detail in her second wheel amazed me. In a few days' time and with some discussion with an adult, she was able to capture every detail of the center of the wheel. She did not transfer all this detail to her final paint and marker representation, but it is more difficult for children to reproduce detail in those media.

Previous / Next



Jorie looked at the wheels carefully and sketched all the parts.

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Jessica drew the emergency door, windows, and the lights.
She counted the lights, too. There are 15 lights.

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Amy found mirrors, a license plate with numbers, and a lot of lights on the front of the bus.

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Counting

Children need opportunity to count and represent their knowledge of numbers either by one to one matching as Nora did—a mark for each seat—or by counting and writing down the numeral as Amy did.

Details

Donny not only noticed the circle shape of the steering wheel but also the bumps where the fingers fit. When children study a real object closely using all their senses, and are required to represent that object, their understanding and learning is real and full of meaning.

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Nora and Amy felt the high backs on the children's seats, and they counted 25 seats.

Donny sat in the driver's seat and drew a circle steering wheel.

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John's Mom helped us
look for places with bumps
to make rubbings.

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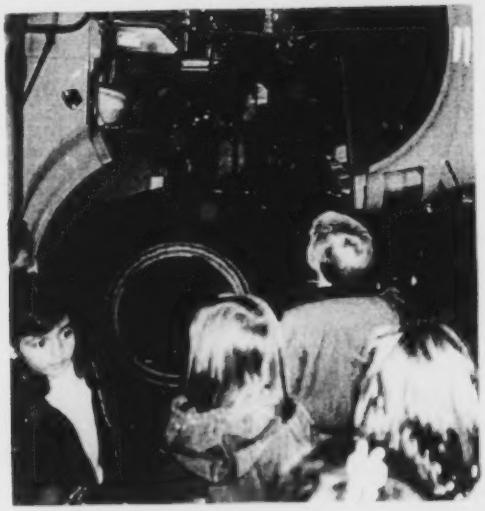
More Questions

After our first visit and the work of putting the bus together began, the children developed new questions. These were how and why questions, questions that indicated children were developing a scientific wondering and deeper thinking than before. So we made a second visit to the bus yard and had a bus driver bring a bus to our sidewalk.

We needed to solve the problem of what's really under the engine hood, too.

Previous / Next



We found out that the motor is under the bus hood,

and the electricity comes from the batteries in the side of the bus.

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After the field trip, Jessica made the back of the bus.

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John and Michael designed windows for their bus side.

Donny took a break from painting to check John's letters.

John put on the last coat of paint.

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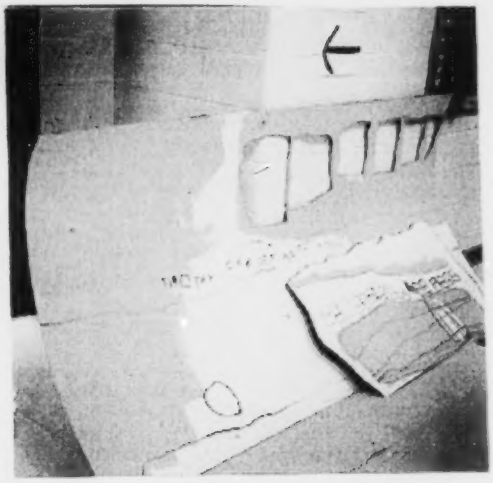
Mandy made a side of the bus,



but decided it was too small for Michael's and John's side.

So she made another one

with 12 windows and the school name.

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Jorie put some color
on her wheels

Then Nora helped put them on the bus.

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Problem Solving

Amy's story demonstrates how difficult it is for children to see someone else's point of view. It took Amy two days to take another look at the object she had made in comparison with the work around her, talk the problem through with Donny, and rethink her position before she could adjust.

Amy's vision of the bus was a row of boxes for children to sit in, the front box for the teacher who would drive. Other children were making sides of various sizes. Donny joined Amy to paint and did the top flaps of her box, seeing it as an engine hood. She said: "Donny ruined it. Those are supposed to get scrunched down so the teacher could sit there. I already made the steering wheel in there." She did not want to approach Donny with her frustrations. Even after seeing the almost finished sides and back held together, she did not see that her front of the bus was not going to fit in. Donny came back and told her, "You need a board up there for a— Amy, pushing his words back, almost pushed him back, and said, "I get it. I get it."

I was very happy to see this problem solved. I did not want to sit with my knees in my chin!

Previous / Next

Donny helped Amy paint,

make a windshield and fenders,

and more friends came to help with rollers, paint pads, and brushes.

Previous / Next

Construction Design

Mr. Senti, the high school industrial arts teacher, designed a plan to put our bus together and sent one of his advanced woods students to demonstrate pounding nails. Matthew took our work seriously and guided the children well, helping to get the nails pounded all the way down.

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Matthew showed us how to pound nails.

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Ashley drew the front door,

put on the lights,

Previous / Next

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and we were ready to play!

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Celebration

Children planned to decorate wheel-shaped cookies for our party. Michael suggested we use chocolate chips in the middle of the cookies to represent lug nuts. They asked to sing "The Wheels on the Bus" with verses about the bus driver, children, lights, stop sign, and yellow guard. Shawn asked for a verse about dinosaurs, but we decided not to include that.

The children understood the elements of a party and had good ideas for food, invitations, and entertainment.

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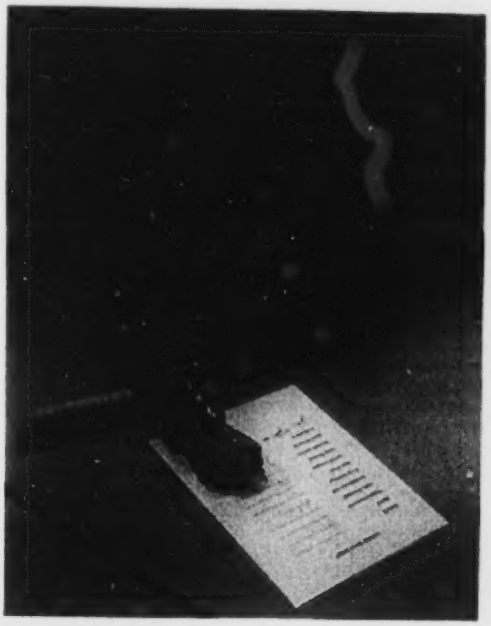
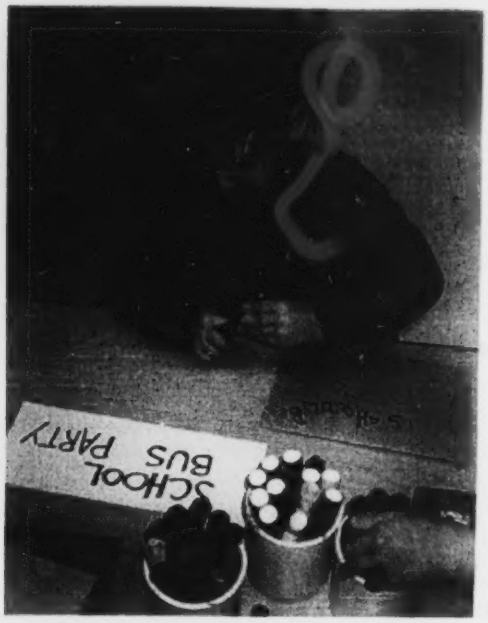


Jessica put down how many cookies we need for her family



and John wrote his family's invitation.

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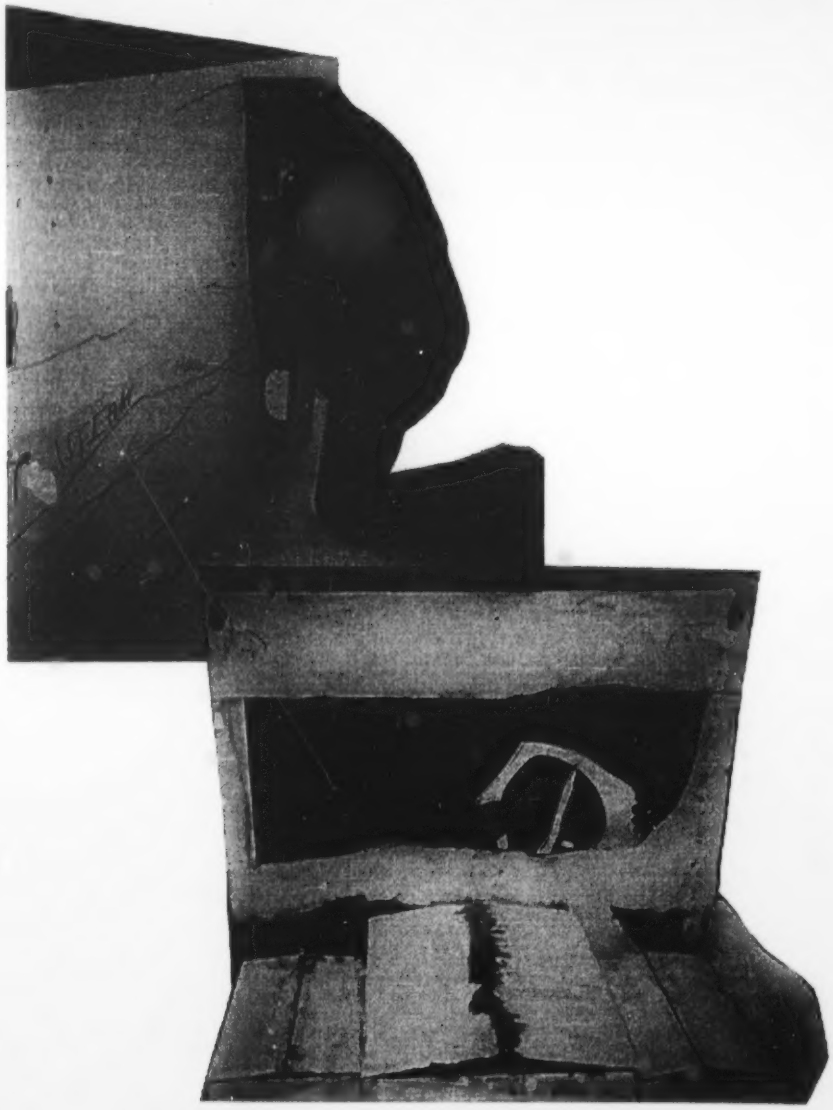

Mr. Bonnes squeezed in and took our bus for a ride.

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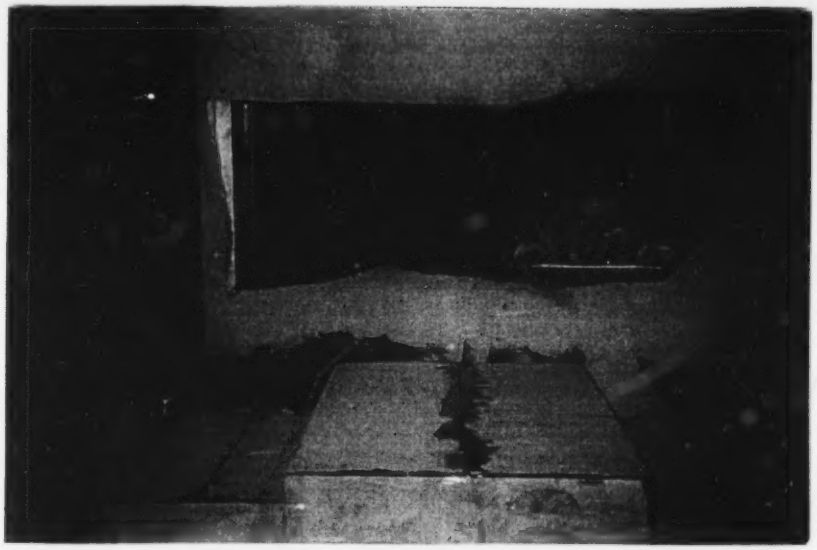

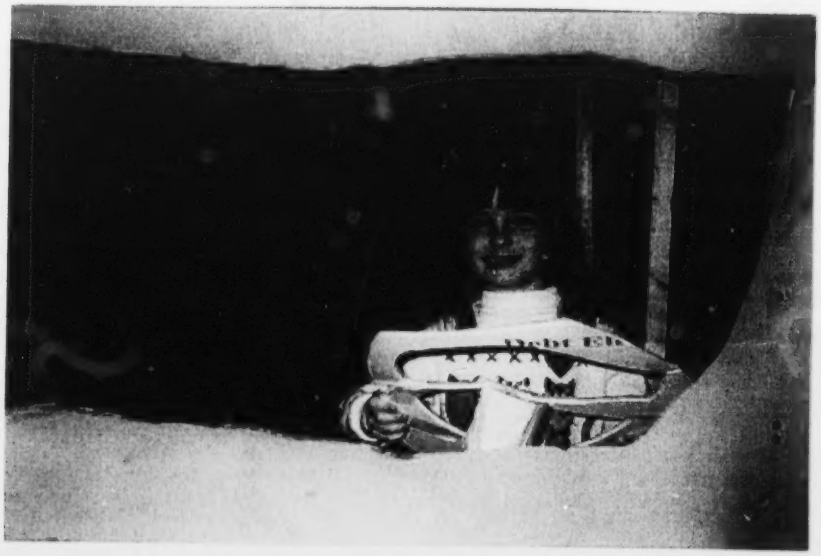

Donny and Amy took turns driving the bus.

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ECRP
EARLY CHILDHOOD RESEARCH & PRACTICE

Volume 1, Number 2

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education: Selected Citations from the ERIC Database

ERIC Documents

ED425855 PS027226
The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach—Advanced Reflections.
Second Edition.
Edwards, Carolyn, Ed.; Gandini, Lella, Ed.; Forman, George, Ed.
1998
500p.
ISBN: 1-56750-311-X
Available From: Ablex Publishing Corporation, P.O. Box 5297, 55 Old Post Road #2, Greenwich, CT 06831; Tel: 203-323-9606; Fax: 203-357-8446 (Cloth: ISBN-1-56750-310-1, $73.25; Paper: ISBN-1-56750-311-X, $39.50).
EDRS Price - MF2 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
Document Type: COLLECTION (020); PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141)
Geographic Source: U.S.; Connecticut
Journal Announcement: RIEMAY99
This collection of essays and interviews documents the unique approach to early childhood education taken by schools in the Reggio Emilia region of Italy. Howard Gardner and David Hawkins provide reflections in chapters that begin the book. The book is then divided into four major parts. Part I includes an introduction by Carolyn Edwards and others, and the essay "What Can We Learn from Reggio Emilia?" (Katz). Part II contains six interviews conducted by Lella Gandini with Reggio Emilia educators: "History, Ideas, and Basic Philosophy," with Loris Malaguzzi; "The Community-Teacher Partnership in the Governance of the Schools," with Sergio Spaggiari; "Projected Curriculum Constructed through Documentation—'Progettazione,'" with Carlina Rinaldi; "The Role of the 'Pedagogista,'" with Tiziana Filippini; "The Role of the 'Atelierista,'" with Vea Vecchi; and "The Voice

of Parents," with Gianna Fontanesi and others. Part III examines the theory and practice of the Reggio Emilia approach through seven essays: "Educational and Caring Spaces" (Gandini); "Partner, Nurturer, and Guide: The Role of the Teacher" (Edwards); "Children with 'Special Rights' in the Preprimary Schools and Infant-Toddler Centers of Reggio Emilia" (Smith); "Curriculum Development in Reggio Emilia: A Long-Term Curriculum Project about Dinosaurs" (Rankin); "Negotiated Learning through Design, Documentation, and Discourse" (Forman and Fyfe); "Theory and Praxis in Reggio Emilia: They Know What They Are Doing, and Why" (New); and "Poppies and the Dance of World Making" (Kaufman). Part IV examines the extension of the Reggio Emilia approach to American classrooms through eight essays: "The Child in Community: Constraints from the Early Childhood Lore" (Nimmo); "Existing Frameworks and New Ideas from Our Reggio Emilia Experience: Learning at a Lab School with 2- to 4-Year-Old Children" (Kantor and Whaley); (3) "Bridge to Another Culture: The Journey of the Model Early Learning Center" (Lewin and others); "The City in the Snow: Applying the Multisymbolic Approach in Massachusetts" (Forman and others); "Looking in the Mirror: A Reflection of Reggio Practice in Winnetka" (Tarini and White); "The Project Approach Framework for Teacher Education: A Case for Collaborative Learning and Reflective Practice" (Moran); "Adapting the Reggio Emilia Approach: Becoming Reference Points for Study and Practice" (Fyfe and others); and "Reconsidering Early Childhood Education in the United States: Reflections from Our Encounters with Reggio Emilia" (Phillips and Bredekamp). The book concludes with reflections by Edwards, Gandini, and Forman; a glossary of terms used by Reggio Emilia educators; and a list of published resources about the Reggio Emilia approach. (LPP)
Descriptors: *Art Education; Community Role; Creative Development; *Curriculum Development; Educational Innovation; Educational Theories; Foreign Countries; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education; Progressive Education; Student Projects; Teacher Role; Teaching Methods
Identifiers: *Italy (Reggio Emilia); *Reggio Emilia Approach; United States

ED426765 PS027068
A Fair Chance: An Evaluation of the Mother-Child Education Program.
Bekman, Sevda
Mother-Child Education Foundation, Istanbul (Turkey).
1998
142p.
Sponsoring Agency: Bernard Van Leer Foundation, The Hague (Netherlands).
ISBN: 975-8085-08-5
EDRS Price - MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
Document Type: EVALUATIVE REPORT (142)
Geographic Source: Turkey
Journal Announcement: RIEJUN99
This book examines the content and effects of the Mother-Child Education Program, an early childhood and adult education program implemented widely in Turkey. The book presents a multipurpose education model, which draws on research indicating that support in early years can affect the development of the child, and which can be used to disseminate early childhood education at a low cost to groups who are most in need. Following a brief preface, the first section of the book examines the Mother-Child Education Program, including the theoretical rationale, how the program is implemented, and how it is disseminated. The second section details the immediate effects of the program, effects on initial school success, and program implementation and dissemination. The third section discusses findings of the study investigating the effects of the program. The fourth section, based on mothers' self-reports, notes changes seen in children, in the mother-child relationship, in the mothers' personality, in the family and the father, and overall opinions of the program. Four appendixes chart the program's

immediate effects, initial school success and school adaptation, program implementation evaluation, and a sample enrichment unit from the program. (Contains 137 references.) (SD)
Descriptors: Adult Education; *Adult Programs; At Risk Persons; Child Development; Early Childhood Education; Educational Strategies; *Family Programs; Foreign Countries; Models; *Mothers; *Nonschool Educational Programs; Parent Child Relationship; Parent Influence; Program Evaluation
Identifiers: Turkey

ED425845 PS027165
Early Childhood Matters: The Bulletin of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, 1998.
Smale, Jim, Ed.
Bernard Van Leer Foundation, The Hague (Netherlands).
Early Childhood Matters, v88-90 Feb-Oct 1998 1998
257p.
ISSN: 1387-9553
Available From: Bernard van Leer Foundation, P.O. Box 82334, 2508 EH, The Hague, The Netherlands; Tel: 31-0-70-351-2040; Fax: 31-0-70-350-2373; e-mail: registry@bvleerf.nl
EDRS Price - MF01/PC11 Plus Postage.
Document Type: SERIAL (022)
Geographic Source: Netherlands
Journal Announcement: RIEMAY99
This document consists of the three 1998 issues of The Bernard van Leer Foundations' "Early Childhood Matters." This periodical, addressed to practitioners in the field of early childhood development, evolved from an in-house publication directed to projects funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Articles in the February 1998 edition include: (1) "Effectiveness: The State of the Art" (Evans); (2) "Alternative Perspectives on ECD: Communities at the Forefront" (Wood); (3) "Spain: Playing My Part" (Paz); (4) "Standing Up for Fairness: Activism with Young Children" (Derman-Sparks); (5) "Developing a Culturally Appropriate Curriculum" (Mitchell); (6) "Mexico: Educational Experience with Women and Girl Children in Rural, Indigenous Communities" (Garcia); and (7) "Venezuela: Developing Inter-Sectorial Networks" (Yanez). The June 1998 issue includes the following: (1) "Culturally Appropriate Approaches in ECD" (Smale); (2) "Trinidad and Tobago: Violent Parenting Violent Children" (Pantin); (3) "Young Children in Complex Emergencies: Field Notes" (Felsman); (4) "Guatemala: Working with the Mayan-Ixil People"(Tzay); (5) "A Culturally Oriented Approach for Early Childhood Development" (Bram); (6) "Building on an African Worldview" (Callaghan); (7) "The Basis of Human Brilliance" (Adamson); and (8) "A Turkish Father in the Netherlands" (Cetin). The October 1998 issue focuses on culturally relevant approaches in early childhood development. The articles are: (1) "Culturally or Contextually Appropriate?" (Smale); (2) "Cultural or Context: What Makes Approaches Appropriate?" (Hurenkamp); (3) "Samenspel: Playing/Taking Action Together" (Copier and Hurenkamp); (4) "Sesame Street: Kids for Peace Project"; (5) "Zimbabwe: The New Community Publishing" (Bond-Stewart); and (6) "Motivating in Challenging Contexts" (Brock). Each issue contains information on foundation publications and announcements related to foundation activities. (KB)
Descriptors: Child Development; Culturally Relevant Education; *Foreign Countries; Newsletters; Personal Narratives; *Preschool Children; *Preschool Education; Program Descriptions
Identifiers: Africa; Guatemala; Mexico; Netherlands; Spain; Trinidad and Tobago; Venezuela

ED425803 PS026955

Hur arbetar forskollarare med bild? En studie av fem forskollarare som leder barn i bildaktiviteter (How Do Preschool Teachers Work with Art Activities? A Study of Five Preschool Teachers Leading Children in Art Activities).

Skoog, Eva
Linkoping Univ. (Sweden). Pedagogiska Inst.
1998
116p.
Report No: LiU-PEK-R-205
ISBN: 91-7219-297-6
ISSN: 0282-4957
EDRS Price - MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
Language: Swedish
Document Type: RESEARCH REPORT (143)
Geographic Source: Sweden
Journal Announcement: RIEMAY99

Art education has traditionally played an important role in the Swedish preschool. The subject includes a variety of activities, and different aims have been stressed from both aesthetic and pedagogical points of view. This study sought to describe and analyze how preschool teachers work with children in art activities. The investigation used a qualitative approach whereby five preschool teachers were observed by means of video recordings. Analysis revealed different categories that described the teachers' ways of leading the activities. The categories are related to: (1) teaching functions, such as instructing and stimulating; (2) actions that create order, such as directing and serving; and (3) actions that create relations, such as conversing and taking notice of children. All the teachers were very active creating relations and serving the children, but they also varied in their ways to lead the activities. Three patterns were discerned concerning ways of working with art activities: "the gardener," letting children use the material freely without much instruction; "the instructor," teaching the children how to handle the materials; and "the pedagogue," stimulating the children's cognitive development. The three patterns seemed to be connected to both the aims and the content of the activities. Findings were explored in light of theory from the aesthetic and art educational field as well as from the preschool pedagogical field. (HTH)

Descriptors: Aesthetics; *Art; *Art Activities; Art Education; Behavior Patterns; Classroom Techniques; Foreign Countries; Preschool Education; *Preschool Teachers; *Teacher Behavior
Identifiers: Sweden

ED424959 PS027091

Early Childhood Development: Laying the Foundations of Learning.

Faccini, Benedict; Combes, Bernard
United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Paris (France).
1998
101p.
EDRS Price - MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
Document Type: REVIEW LITERATURE (070); POSITION PAPER (120); PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141)
Geographic Source: France
Journal Announcement: RIEAPR99
Government: International

Early childhood development is increasingly viewed as an affirmation of children's rights. This report describes the concept of early childhood development and presents several viewpoints regarding early

childhood care and development, parenting, and approaches to early education. The report also presents 10 case studies of programs to enhance the development of young children and their families throughout the world. Part 1 of the report examines early childhood development as providing the foundation for later learning, and discusses several topics such as: the state of current research about the learning process; caregivers' role in supporting children's learning; linking current research to practice; identifying effective models for early childhood development in various cultures; and national attitudes toward early childhood development and improving learning conditions for young children. This section also suggests ways to enhance public policy in early childhood development. Part 2 presents the following papers regarding early childhood care and development: (1) "Parents as Care-givers, Teachers and Learners: Examples from Asia" (de los Angeles-Bautista); (2) "Early Childhood Care and Development: Where We Stand and the Challenges We Face" (Evans); (3) "Value Outcomes in Early Childhood Development" (Weikart); (4) "Approaches of Early Childhood Education" (Arango); (5) "The Whole (All) Must Grow Through Learning" (Hesse); and (6) "From Centre-Based Pre-School to Integrated Child and Family Educational Programming" (Bennett). Part 3 of the report presents case studies describing early education programs, parent education programs, and research initiatives in Trinidad and Tobago, Colombia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, South Africa, Ireland, China, India, Mali, and Arab countries. (KB)
Descriptors: Case Studies; Child Development; Child Rearing; *Early Childhood Education; *Family Programs; *Foreign Countries; Models; *Parent Child Relationship; Parents; Preschool Curriculum; Program Descriptions; Public Policy; *Young Children
Identifiers: Arab States; China; Colombia; India; Ireland; Laos; Mali; South Africa; Trinidad and Tobago

ED424915 PS026994
Educational Changes: The Basic and Real Facts of Traditional Continuity in Post- Communist Poland. (Implications for Childhood Education).
Radziewcz-Winnicki, Andrezej
1998
11p.; Paper presented at the Annual European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Conference (8th, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, September 2-5, 1998).
EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
Document Type: PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141); CONFERENCE PAPER (150)
Geographic Source: Poland
Journal Announcement: RIEAPR99
This paper describes recent social changes in Poland and their implications for early childhood care and education, focusing on the creation of a progressive educational system based on the unified school. Key issues receiving particular attention are the problems of reorganizing the educational system, increasing students' learning effectiveness, incorporating new modes of curriculum innovation, developing patterns of political socialization, organizing educational research and its relevance to pedagogy, and creating new patterns in teacher education. The paper analyzes whether it is possible to create a new and progressive educational system in a short time. (KB)
Descriptors: Curriculum; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational Change; Educational Innovation; Educational Research; Foreign Countries; Social Change; Teacher Education
Identifiers: *Poland

ED424010 PS026978

Children's Stories and Play: Storyride—A Children's Culture Project.
Brostrom, Stig
1998
19p.; Paper presented at the Symposium for the European Conference on Quality in Early Childhood Settings (8th, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, September 2-5, 1998).
EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
Document Type: PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141); CONFERENCE PAPER (150)
Geographic Source: Denmark
Journal Announcement: RIEMAR99
In modern societies, children are becoming more and more users of a child culture constructed by adults, rather than producers of their own culture. This paper describes a project, implemented in Nordic child care centers and early childhood classes, that provides children the opportunity to narrate and illustrate their own stories, written down by educators and mailed to an exchange institution in their own or another Nordic country. The purpose of the project is to support children's own culture, increase children's interest in language, strengthen early childhood educators' competence about children's culture, and form the basis for expanded research in this field. In various countries, different components to the research are added: for example, in Denmark, researchers have analyzed stories and have observed the children in play to identify similarities in themes, problems, and solutions in stories and play. This paper discusses children's story listening at home and in day care settings in Denmark, the teacher's role in storytelling, the structure of children's stories, and the use of fairy tales. The analysis of children's stories and play indicates that general themes include power relationships, good versus wicked, attack and defense, and chase and run away. The paper notes that although children create a number of roles in play and stories, the description of context is often poor in stories. Contains 14 references. (KB)
Descriptors: Caregiver Child Relationship; *Day Care; *Early Childhood Education; Exchange Programs; Foreign Countries; Literacy Education; Parent Child Relationship; Play; Pretend Play; Story Grammar; *Story Telling; Teacher Role; Teacher Student Relationship; *Writing Instruction; Young Children
Identifiers: Denmark; Finland; Iceland; *Nordic Countries; Nordic Countries; Norway; Play Themes; *Story Writing; Sweden

ED424009 PS026977
Learning and Teaching Stories: New Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation in Relation to Te Whariki.
Carr, Margaret; May, Helen; Podmore, Val
Victoria Univ. of Wellington (New Zealand). Inst. for Early Childhood Studies.
1998
39p.; Paper presented at the Symposium for the European Conference on Quality in Early Childhood Settings (8th, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, September 2-5, 1998).
ISBN: 0-475-20054-3
EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
Document Type: PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141); CONFERENCE PAPER (150)
Geographic Source: New Zealand
Journal Announcement: RIEMAR99
In a climate of increasing concern with educational accountability and quality, it has been important to reappraise the issues of assessment and evaluation in relation to early childhood care and education. This document is comprised of three papers describing approaches to assessment and evaluation used in Te Whariki, a national curriculum statement and framework for early childhood education and care in

New Zealand. The first paper, "An Update of Te Whariki, The New Zealand National Early Childhood Curriculum," describes the overall principles, strands, and goals for all early childhood programs, focusing on the fundamental principle of empowering children and outlining some implementation issues for early childhood centers. The second paper, "Project for Assessing Children's Experiences in Early Childhood Settings," outlines a three-phase research project to provide assessment guidelines for practitioners implementing Te Whariki: (1) developing an integrated structure of outcomes called the Learning Story framework; (2) implementing the framework in a variety of early childhood settings; and (3) developing resources for professional development. The third paper, "Developing a Framework for Self Evaluation of Early Childhood Programmes," outlines the policy context of evaluation and quality in New Zealand, describes an ethnographic study focusing identifying the key elements of program quality in relation to Te Whariki strands and goals which should be the focus of evaluation, and discusses how the Teaching Stories provide a focus for reflection and appraisal. Each paper contains references. (Author/JPB)
Descriptors: Educational Quality; Foreign Countries; *National Curriculum; National Standards; *Preschool Education; Professional Development; Program Evaluation; Self Evaluation (Groups); Student Educational Objectives; Student Evaluation; Young Children
Identifiers: New Zealand; *Te Whariki (New Zealand)

ED423986 PS026931
The Socializing Role of Early Childhood Development and Education (ECD) in the 21st Century.
Fthenakis, Wassilios E.
1998
30p.; Paper presented at the European Policy Conference (Amsterdam, April 23-24, 1998).
EDRS Price - MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
Document Type: PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141); CONFERENCE PAPER (150)
Geographic Source: Germany
Journal Announcement: RIEMAR99
Noting demographic and socio-political shifts in Europe, this paper discusses challenges facing early childhood education in providing children with sufficient competence to cope successfully with discontinuities in their lives caused by rapidly changing social conditions and family structure. The paper outlines some contextual conditions which need to be considered when defining quality education, then focuses on three aspects of European early childhood education of central importance in terms of social integration: social integration of children with special needs, intercultural education as a reality in Europe, and continuities versus discontinuities, or coping with transitions. The educational-political consequences of multicultural education are outlined, including official recognition of multicultural groups, the right to kindergarten education for all children, and the necessity intercultural education and teacher training. The paper also discusses current trends in daycare in Europe, outlining the different types of institutions, creating networks between institutions, training staff, and political decisions regarding the relationship between state regulation and regional profiles. (JPB)
Descriptors: Day Care; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational Objectives; Educational Policy; Educational Quality; Family Structure; Foreign Countries; *Social Change; *Social Influences; Sociocultural Patterns; Teacher Education
Identifiers: *Europe

ED423094 RC021645

Achieving Educational Excellence in Majuro, RMI. Promising Practices in the Pacific Region.
Donahue, Tim
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, Honolulu, HI.
1998
5p.
Sponsoring Agency: Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
Contract No: RJ96006601
Available From: Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, Ali'i Place, 25th Floor, 1099 Alakea Street, Honolulu, HI 96813-4500; World Wide Web: http://www.prel.hawaii.edu
EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
Document Type: EVALUATIVE REPORT (142)
Geographic Source: U.S.; Hawaii
Journal Announcement: RIEFEB99
The Rita Christian School on Majuro in the Republic of the Marshall Islands is a comprehensive preK-8 program that has successfully combined factors that contribute to an effective school program for the Pacific region. Factors contributing to the school's success are community involvement, strong leadership, a committed and well-trained staff, year-round scheduling, and an effective language teaching program. Pacific Islanders' traditional views of authority are often detrimental to community involvement, but Rita Christian School was built by the church congregation, fueled by its belief that education's primary purpose is to instill Christian values. Pacific Islanders respond to good leadership but tend to accept ineffective leadership rather than challenge it. Therefore, leadership must be strong, and the principal of Rita Christian has fulfilled this role. Staff development opportunities at the school include weekly teachers' meetings that focus on curriculum and teaching, networking, mentoring, and a collaborative training partnership between school and local government. A change to year-round scheduling improved attendance and learning retention and provided opportunities for remedial help and a sense of continuity. Although English is the common language, its introduction takes place in a 2-year bilingual preschool environment that supports the students' home language. In following this school's model, Pacific communities might focus on school purpose to increase community involvement, strong leadership development, staff training, year-round scheduling, and the timing and quality of the introduction of English as the medium of instruction. (SAS)
Descriptors: Community Involvement; *Educational Practices; Elementary Education; Foreign Countries; *Pacific Islanders; *Parochial Schools; Preschool Education; *School Community Relationship; *School Effectiveness; Small Schools
Identifiers: *Marshall Islands

ED421221 PS026652
An Innovation in Morocco's Koranic Pre-Schools. Working Papers in Early Childhood Development, No. 23.
Bouzoubaa, Khadija
Bernard Van Leer Foundation, The Hague (Netherlands).
1998
23p.
ISBN: 90-6195-049-X
ISSN: 1383-7907
Available From: Bernard van Leer Foundation, P.O. Box 82334, 2508 EH, The Hague, The Netherlands; phone: 31-70-3512040; fax: 31-70-3502373; e-mail: registry@bvleerf.nl (Single copies are available free of charge. Small charge will be made for multiple copies).
EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

Document Type: PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141)
Geographic Source: Netherlands
Journal Announcement: RIEDEC98
This working paper describes the ATFALE project to introduce pedagogical innovation into Moroccan preschools. Following a review of the history of the traditional Muslim Kuttab school for preschool and early elementary school children, the paper discusses the educational reform goals of the ATFALE project. Specifically, the project plans to develop a child-centered concept of preschool education, support new approaches to retraining of teachers, develop methods to make teachers more sensitive to the need for parental involvement in the schools, develop a training methodology that allows teachers to integrate innovative and adequate educational practices, and to stimulate and create more dynamic training facilities. The paper then considers plans for the operational framework and cooperation of the ATFALE and Koranic Preschool Group, the strategy for introducing innovation into Koranic preschools, the evolution of the action-research, and the impact of the project on pedagogical activities and at institutional and administrative levels to date. (JPB)
Descriptors: Change Strategies; *Educational Change; Educational History; *Educational Innovation; Foreign Countries; Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; *Preschool Education; Preschool Teachers; *Student Centered Curriculum; Teacher Education
Identifiers: Historical Background; Morocco

ED419846 TM028422
Evaluation of Educational Programmes in Turkey.
Yasar, Sefik
1998
8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Diego, CA, April 13-17, 1998).
EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
Document Type: PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141); CONFERENCE PAPER (150)
Geographic Source: Turkey
Journal Announcement: RIEOCT98
The educational system of Turkey and educational evaluation efforts are described. In Turkey, the educational system includes optional preschool education, compulsory elementary education through age 14, secondary education for 3 or 4 years more (3 for university preparation, 4 for vocational education), and higher education. All of the preschool, elementary, and secondary programs are centrally prepared by the Ministry of Education (MOE), while higher education is cooperatively prepared by the Higher Educational Council and specialists at the universities. Reflective, formative, and summative evaluations are conducted. Most educational evaluation in Turkey, and especially most formative evaluation, is done by academic researchers, and findings of these evaluations are not used as much as they could be because of lack of cooperation with the MOE and educational systems. To solve the problem of evaluation utilization in Turkey, more cooperation between the MOE and academic researchers will be necessary. (Contains 12 references.) (SLD)
Descriptors: *Cooperation; *Educational Research; *Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Foreign Countries; Formative Evaluation; *Government Role; *Higher Education; Preschool Education; *Program Evaluation; Summative Evaluation; Vocational Education
Identifiers: *Turkey

ED419588 PS026463

Access to Early Childhood Development: Strategies for Enhancing Social Integration.
Wazir, Rekha; van Oudenhoven, Nico
1998
12p.; Paper presented at the European Policy Conference on Early Childhood Education as a Structural Approach to Integrating Children and Families at Risk: A Challenge for Policy Makers (Amsterdam, Netherlands, April 23-24, 1998).
EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
Document Type: POSITION PAPER (120); CONFERENCE PAPER (150)
Geographic Source: Netherlands
Journal Announcement: RIEOCT98
Access to early childhood education and social exclusion are issues currently of importance for policy and program development in Europe. This paper explores links between early education access and social exclusion in regard to profound and rapid changes in Europe that are forcing families to find new ways to remain integrated within their communities and societies, and to prepare their children for adult lives. The paper argues that early childhood education can be an effective mechanism for promoting social integration and cohesion, particularly for socially excluded families. Access to early education could open doors to many other services, further integrating these families. Creating full accessibility should be given the highest political priority, but to reach the marginalized and excluded segments, public awareness would have to grow and strategies to improve access to services would need to be introduced. The paper then considers strategies centering on the client, program, policy and organization. The paper concludes by noting that the nature of services provided would also have to be scrutinized with respect to their suitability for supporting children at risk. (JPB)
Descriptors: *Access To Education; At Risk Persons; Change Strategies; Disadvantaged Environment; *Early Childhood Education; Early Intervention; *Family Programs; Foreign Countries; *Public Policy; *Social Environment; *Social Integration; Social Isolation; Special Needs Students
Identifiers: Europe

ED423022 PS026056
In the Public Interest: The Benefits of High Quality Child Care. Videotape .
Toronto Univ. (Ontario). Centre for Urban and Community Studies.; Mark Rubin Productions, Weston, MA.
1997
0p.
Available From: Childhood Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto, 455 Spadina Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2G3, Canada; phone: 416-978-6895; e-mail: crru@chass.utoronto.ca
Document Not Available from EDRS.
Document Type: AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL (100)
Geographic Source: Canada; Ontario
Journal Announcement: RIEFEB99
Noting that, in Canada, 10,000 child care programs serve children and families of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, this video examines the characteristics and benefits of high quality programs. The 22-minute video first cites two reasons why quality child care is a current issue: the increasing number of women in the workforce and research showing the positive impact of high quality programs on how a child learns, regardless of the child's background or whether the mother works. The video then defines child care, and explores the characteristics of high quality programs, including stable and consistent caregiving, age-appropriate activities, and hygienic facilities and routines. Characteristics of high quality caregivers are then listed, including training in early childhood education, skills needed to encourage cooperative relationships, and a sympathetic, warm, caring demeanor. Additional factors

contributing to high quality in a care program are noted, such as solid regulation and supervision, and not-for-profit operation. The video next notes that high quality child care is a unique endeavor in that it benefits several groups at the same time: children, families, women, employers, communities, and society at large. The benefits specific to each of these groups are then detailed. The video concludes by noting that high quality programs are exceptions rather than the rule, and advocates Canadian public policy to invest in high quality program standards. (HTH)
Descriptors: Caregiver Child Relationship; *Day Care; *Day Care Effects; Early Childhood Education; Foreign Countries; Public Policy; *Teacher Characteristics
Identifiers: Canada; *Day Care Quality; Program Characteristics; *Quality Indicators

ED422220 SO029044
Perspectives on the Mexican Education System: Prejudices, Problems, Possibilities. Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Abroad 1997 (Mexico).
Socha, Donald E.
1997
18p.
Sponsoring Agency: Center for International Education (ED), Washington, DC.
EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
Document Type: PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141)
Geographic Source: U.S.; Wisconsin
Journal Announcement: RIEJAN99
This paper examines the complex Mexican educational system and how numerous factors influence its success, depending on one's point of reference. Many ideological and subjective judgments are made in this evaluation. Non-compulsory preschool enrollment figures show tremendous growth in the past 25 years, as does the growth in the number of children 6-14 years old attending school. In 1992 the process of educational reform undertook four important movements: (1) decentralization of the system from federal to state control; (2) curricular reform of basic education; (3) in-service teacher retraining courses; and (4) reform of teacher training programs. The paper argues that this reform procedure represents a tendency toward greater democracy, autonomy, and self-rule in the Mexican educational structure and process, but these tendencies have been circumscribed by prejudices within Mexican society. The paper cites the various kinds of prejudices to be found in Mexico, including racism, sexism, nationality, and overpopulation. The potential for Mexico to achieve its educational goals is greater now than ever before in its history, yet the people must address the issues of social injustice in the society. (EH)
Descriptors: Comparative Education; Cultural Awareness; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Global Education; Higher Education; *Latin American History; Latin Americans; *Mexicans; Multicultural Education; Preschool Education
Identifiers: *Latin American Studies; *Mexico

ED422052 PS025707
The Early Years: Embracing the Challenges. 1997 Early Years of Schooling Conference Proceedings (Melbourne, Australia, July 20-21, 1997).
Victoria Education Dept. (Australia).
1997
97p.
Available From: Curriculum Corporation, Casselden Place, Level 5, 2 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne,

Victoria 3000, Australia ($9.95 Australian Dollars).
Document Not Available from EDRS.
Document Type: CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS (021)
Geographic Source: Australia; Victoria
Journal Announcement: RIEJAN99
Government: Foreign
These conference proceedings comprise 19 papers and the plenary session presented at the Early Years Schooling Conference held in Melbourne, Australia. The plenary session was "A Developmental Approach to Teaching Young Children" conducted by Lilian Katz. The keynote addresses and breakout sessions were: (1) "Developmental Learning: How to Learn" (Heard, Stevens and Biddle); (2) "More Patterns in Poetry" (Hinchcliffe); (3) "Challenges of Understanding Children's Thinking" (Robbins); (4) "Impact of the Early Literacy Research Project" (Potter); (5) "Literacy Intervention P-2: Building a Solid Foundation" (Stanley); (6) "Teaching Readers in the Classroom" (Department of Education); (7) "Climbing the Language Mountain" (Crystal); (8) "Reggio Emelia in the Victorian Classroom" (Doig and Larkins); (9) "Towards a Love of Learning: Challenging our Preschool Children" (Margetts); (10) "Challenging All Children in a Mixed Ability Classroom" (Nelson and Fyfe); (11) "Education and Enlightenment: Koorie Education, from Birth and Beyond" (Department of Education); (12) "Parents Supporting Readers" (Department of Education); (13) "Adding Growth Rings: Additional Insights into the Art of Teaching Writing" (Bolton); (14) "Promoting the Growth of Mathematical Thinking in Young Children" (Mulligan); (15) "Early Years Can Tackle the Issues for Later Years" (McNicol); (16) "Windows and Doors: Computers in Early Literacy Programs' (Graham and Oxenbould); (17) "Children Learning to Write in Preschool" (Reynolds); (18) "Implementing the CSF through Play Sessions" (Wilson); and (19) "Implementing a Structured Classroom Literacy Program: A Small School's Experience" (Maine and Kliman). Each paper contains references. (KB)
Descriptors: Child Development; *Classroom Techniques; Cognitive Development; Computer Uses in Education; Day Care; *Early Childhood Education; Emergent Literacy; Foreign Countries; Grouping (Instructional Purposes); *Learning Processes; Literacy Education; Mathematical Concepts; Mathematics Instruction; Play; Poetry; Preschool Education; Program Evaluation; Teaching Methods; Transfer of Training; Writing Instruction; *Young Children
Identifiers: Australia; Challenge; Katz (Lilian G); Koori People; Reggio Emilia Approach

ED421203 PS026046
Preschool Education in Portugal: Development, Innovation and Changes—Will We Be Able To Cross the Bridge?
Vasconcelos, Teresa
1997
9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Anaheim, CA, November 12-15, 1997). For related paper, see ED 415 968.
EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
Document Type: PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141); CONFERENCE PAPER (150)
Geographic Source: Portugal
Journal Announcement: RIEDEC98
This paper discusses public policies in Portugal that call for partnerships in education to provide preschool education for all children. Preschool education is envisioned as a first step on the path towards a strong, humane society. A new role is foreseen for the State, involving fewer direct services and less bureaucratic administration, but providing more efficient supervision, with a regulating and compensatory role. The role of the Law for Preschool Education and the Plan for Expansion and Development of Preschool Education in defining both the goals of preschool education and the role of

curriculum guidelines are discussed. The article notes the creation of an Office for the Expansion and Development of Preschool Education. The importance of teachers and in-service training in improving preschool education is also considered. (JPB)
Descriptors: Educational Improvement; Educational Objectives; *Educational Policy; Educational Principles; Federal Legislation; *Federal Regulation; Foreign Countries; Government Role; *Government School Relationship; *Partnerships in Education; *Preschool Education; *Public Policy
Identifiers: Portugal

ED419577 PS026264
Caribbean Conference on Early Childhood Education (2nd, Dover Convention Centre, Barbados, April 1-5, 1997). Summary Report.
Lundy, Christine
Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs, and Culture (Barbados).; United Nations Children's Fund, Christ Church (Barbados).
1997
134p.
EDRS Price - MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
Document Type: CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS (021)
Geographic Source: Barbados
Journal Announcement: RIEOCT98
Government: International
The objectives of the Second Caribbean Conference on Early Childhood Education included: (1) setting a framework for the development of early childhood programs in the Caribbean; (2) initiating a Plan of Action to address early childhood issues in the Caribbean in terms of policy, structure, and implementation; and (3) facilitating the networking of early childhood education professionals. Following an introduction outlining the companies aims and objectives, the sections of the report are: (1) "The Value of Early Childhood Education and Development—the Case for Investment"; (2) "Challenges and Opportunities in the Caribbean"; (3) "A Quest for Quality"; (4) "Integrated Approaches"; (5) "Mobilizing Support"; and (6) "The Next Stage." The report's appendices contain a Caribbean Plan of Action, an adopted resolution, a situation analysis, list of conference documents, list of participants, and the agenda. (EV)
Descriptors: Change Strategies; *Early Childhood Education; Educational Finance; *Educational Improvement; Educational Policy; Educational Quality; Foreign Countries; Government Role; Integrated Activities; Policy Formation
Identifiers: *Caribbean

Journal Articles

EJ570840 RC512765
A Research Analysis of Pre-School Provision in the Market Place.
Brown, Sally; Stephen, Christine; Low, Lesley
Scottish Educational Review, v30 n1 p4-14 May 1998
ISSN: 0141-9072
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); RESEARCH REPORT (143)
Journal Announcement: CIJAPR99

In 1996, a voucher scheme was introduced to promote educational provision for preschool children in Scotland. Qualitative and quantitative explorations of the views of parents and providers describe the workings of the educational "market" when one of the competing sectors (public sector) had a substantial monopoly power over the others (private and voluntary sectors). (Author/SV)
Descriptors: Competition; *Educational Supply; *Educational Vouchers; Foreign Countries; Free Enterprise System; *Parent Attitudes; Parent Participation; *Preschool Education; Private Education; Public Education; *School Choice
Identifiers: *Scotland

EJ570708 PS528159
Preschool Children's War Play: How Do Greek Teachers and Parents Cope with It?
Doliopoulou, Elsie
European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, v6 n1 p73-86 1998
ISSN: 1350-293X
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); RESEARCH REPORT (143)
Journal Announcement: CIJAPR99
Replicated Carlsson-Paige and Levin's studies on teachers and parents coping with children's war play in Greece. Found that teachers' and parents' opinions were comparable to Americans'. Most Greek teachers limited rather than banned war play and were satisfied with their approach to war play. Parents' approaches were similar to those of Americans. Most Greek children invented or created weapons. (Author/KB)
Descriptors: Classroom Techniques; Coping; Foreign Countries; *Parent Attitudes; Parent Child Relationship; *Play; Preschool Education; *Pretend Play; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Student Relationship; *War; *Young Children
Identifiers: Greece; Research Replication; *War Games (Children); War Toys

EJ570705 PS528156
The Influence of Researcher-Teacher Collaboration on the Effectiveness of the Early Learning of Four Year Olds in Schools in England.
Mould, Claire
European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, v6 n1 p19-35 1998
ISSN: 1350-293X
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); RESEARCH REPORT (143)
Journal Announcement: CIJAPR99
Examined the potential of teacher-researcher collaboration for enhancing the effectiveness of early learning experiences of 4-year-olds in England. Found that, during fieldwork, child engagement and teachers' stimulation, sensitivity, engagement, and autonomy increased. Teacher and student engagement were related. Suggests that teachers who strive toward optimum learning and well-being can provide children with the best learning experiences. (Author/KB)
Descriptors: Academic Achievement; Action Research; *Cooperation; *Educational Research; Foreign Countries; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education; Program Effectiveness; Qualitative Research; *Teacher Behavior; Teacher Improvement; Teacher Student Relationship
Identifiers: England; Researcher Role; Researcher Subject Relationship; *Student Engagement; Teacher Engagement; *Teacher Researcher Relationship

EJ569135 PS528089
Possibilities of Change in the Education of the Youngest People.
Waloszek, Danuta
International Journal of Early Years Education, v6 n2 p177-83 Jun 1998
ISSN: 0966-9760
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080)
Journal Announcement: CIJMAR99
Discusses the essence of child education in Poland, focusing on preschool education. The concept of the playgroup is examined as a place concerned with providing students with knowledge. An alternative is suggested which takes into account the child's feelings and relationship with the family and close environment. (JPB)
Descriptors: *Classroom Environment; *Educational Innovation; Family Role; *Family School Relationship; Foreign Countries; *Play; Preschool Children; *Preschool Education
Identifiers: Poland

EJ569134 PS528088
The Educational System in Poland and Other Central-Eastern European Countries During the Transition Period.
Piwowarski, Rafal
International Journal of Early Years Education, v6 n2 p165-76 Jun 1998
ISSN: 0966-9760
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080)
Journal Announcement: CIJMAR99
Examines the developments and direction of educational-system changes which have taken place in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia during the past decade. Comparisons are made between the four countries, focusing on the following areas: school reforms, change of the structure, and non-public schools. (JPB)
Descriptors: Comparative Analysis; *Comparative Education; *Educational Change; Elementary Education; Foreign Countries; Preschool Education; School Restructuring; Secondary Education; Social Change
Identifiers: Czech Republic; *Europe (East Central); Hungary; Poland; Slovakia

EJ567793 PS527876
International Perspectives on Quality Child Care.
Textor, Martin R.
Early Childhood Education Journal, v25 n3 p167-71 Spr 1998
ISSN: 1082-3301
Document Type: REVIEW LITERATURE (070); JOURNAL ARTICLE (080)
Journal Announcement: CIJFEB99
Presents criteria of good child care as revealed by international research studies of child care settings. Criteria discussed include: class size, teacher/child ratio, size and equipment of the classroom, teacher behavior, parent cooperation, and teacher qualifications. Also discusses whether such criteria are shared by teachers and parents. (TJQ)
Descriptors: Class Size; *Classroom Environment; *Day Care; *Day Care Centers; Early Childhood Education; Foreign Countries; Parent Attitudes; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Program Evaluation;

Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Qualifications; *Teacher Student Ratio
Identifiers: Learning Environment; *Quality Indicators

EJ566672 PS527981
Te Whaariki: New Zealand Guidelines for an Early Childhood Curriculum.
Guild, Diana E.; Lyons, Lesley; Whiley, Jennie
International Journal of Early Childhood, v30 n1 p65-70 May 1998
ISSN: 0020-7187
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141)
Journal Announcement: CIJJAN99
Describes the early childhood education system in New Zealand, and "Te Whaariki," the comprehensive National Early Childhood Education Curriculum Guidelines. Includes a discussion of the curricular aims, theoretical underpinnings, and foundational principles and goals; also discusses meeting the needs of children with special needs, the Maori immersion curriculum, and professional development. (KB)
Descriptors: *Early Childhood Education; Educational Theories; Foreign Countries; Immersion Programs; Maori; Maori (People); *National Curriculum; *Preschool Curriculum; *Preschool Education; Professional Development; Special Needs Students; *Young Children
Identifiers: *New Zealand

EJ566670 PS527979
Promoting Children's Interests and Rights in Education: The Contribution of the Ombudsman for Children to the Compulsory School Reform.
Hauge, Tove
International Journal of Early Childhood, v30 n1 p52-55 May 1998
ISSN: 0020-7187
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141)
Journal Announcement: CIJJAN99
Examines 1990s school-related activities and rhetoric of Norway's Ombudsman for Children related to: (1) children's rights to education, especially religious and moral education and in the closest environment; (2) rights in education, including a secure procedure for individual complaints; and (3) rights through education to participation and democracy. Concludes that the Ombudsman has attended little to educational quality. (KB)
Descriptors: *Child Advocacy; Childhood Needs; Childrens Rights; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational Change; Educational Policy; Educational Quality; Foreign Countries; Policy Analysis; Public Policy; *Young Children
Identifiers: 1990s; Norway; *Ombudsman for Children (Norway)

EJ566666 PS527975
Child Care in Sweden.
International Journal of Early Childhood, v30 n1 p20-26 May 1998
ISSN: 0020-7187
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141)
Journal Announcement: CIJJAN99
Describes the child care system in Sweden, focusing on policy measures and legislation for children and

families. Describes types of day care programs, including centers, open preschools, family day care, school age services, children requiring special support, and children from other cultures. Outlines recently proposed guidelines for preschool curriculum, staff qualifications, and rights of hospitalized children. (KB)
Descriptors: Childrens Rights; *Day Care; Disabilities; Early Childhood Education; *Educational Policy; Employment Qualifications; Family Day Care; Federal Legislation; Foreign Countries; Leaves of Absence; Preschool Curriculum; Program Descriptions; Public Policy; School Age Day Care; *Young Children
Identifiers: Child Care Legislation; Parental Leave; *Sweden

EJ566663 PS527972
Early Childhood Education in Iceland: Play and Print and I Can Do What I Get a Chance to Do.
Sigurdardottir, M.; Birgisdottir, S.
International Journal of Early Childhood, v30 n1 p9-14 May 1998
ISSN: 0020-7187
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141); EVALUATIVE REPORT (142)
Journal Announcement: CIJJAN99
Details two Icelandic early childhood education projects. "Play and Print" found that increasing print exposure and reinforcing role-play related to reading and writing improved preschoolers' language maturity. The "I Can Do What I Get a Chance to Do" project modified lunch, group time, artwork, and play components of the preschool program to fit the needs of 1- to 3-year olds. (KB)
Descriptors: Childhood Needs; *Early Childhood Education; *Emergent Literacy; Foreign Countries; Infant Care; Infants; Language Acquisition; Play; *Preschool Children; Program Evaluation; Teaching Methods; Toddlers
Identifiers: *Iceland

EJ566662 PS527971
Anniversaries in the Finnish Kindergarten System: How and Why the System Was Created.
Honkavaara, Pirjo
International Journal of Early Childhood, v30 n1 p7-9 May 1998
ISSN: 0020-7187
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141)
Journal Announcement: CIJJAN99
Describes preschool education as it is integrated into the day care system in Finland. Discusses founding of first Finnish kindergartens, growing need for more extensive day care, the current municipal day care system, the Day Care Act guaranteeing the subjective right to day care for all children under age 7, and the educational role of day care. (KB)
Descriptors: Childrens Rights; *Day Care; Educational History; *Educational Policy; Foreign Countries; *Kindergarten; *Preschool Children; *Preschool Education; Role of Education
Identifiers: Child Care Needs; *Finland; Historical Background

EJ566661 PS527970
Facts and Figures about Early Childhood and Youth Education in Denmark.
Lund, Stig G.

International Journal of Early Childhood, v30 n1 p1-6 May 1998
ISSN: 0020-7187
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141)
Journal Announcement: CIJJAN99
Describes early childhood and youth education in Denmark, including types of day care, enrollment figures, legislation and regulations, and program objectives. Discusses the integration of early childhood education within Denmark's social welfare system, educational approaches taken, and typical educational activities. Also discusses parent payment, administration, personnel management, vocational training, research, and educational change. (KB)
Descriptors: After School Programs; *Day Care; *Early Childhood Education; Educational Change; Educational Objectives; Enrollment Trends; Federal Legislation; Fees; Foreign Countries; Personnel Management; Program Descriptions; School Age Day Care; Vocational Education; Welfare Services; *Young Children
Identifiers: Day Care Regulations; *Denmark

EJ564388 PS527868
Necessity the Mother of Invention: Australian and Eritrean Early Childhood Educators Sharing Skills and Experiences.
Andreoni, Helen
Australian Journal of Early Childhood, v23 n1 p5-9 Mar 1998
ISSN: 0312-5033
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); RESEARCH REPORT (143)
Journal Announcement: CIJNOV98
Describes the work of Australian and Eritrean early childhood educators to establish early childhood education in Eritrea. Discusses how Australian educators are learning about managing multicultural and multilingual communities; Eritrean educators are learning about a holistic approach to education to meet social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and developmental needs of Eritrean children. (Author)
Descriptors: Change Agents; *Change Strategies; Childhood Needs; Cultural Pluralism; *Early Childhood Education; Educational Administration; *Educational Change; *Educational Cooperation; Educational Development; Educational Innovation; Foreign Countries; Holistic Approach; Multilingualism; *Preschool Teachers
Identifiers: Africa; Australia; *Eritrea

EJ564378 PS527843
Parental Expectations of Early Childhood Services for Preschool Children: The Case of Policy Change in Greece.
Laloumi-Vidali, Eva
International Journal of Early Years Education, v6 n1 p19-30 Mar 1998
ISSN: 0966-9760
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); RESEARCH REPORT (143)
Journal Announcement: CIJNOV98
Investigated parental expectations of Greek early childhood education and care services. Found that the administrative division between types of preschool was related to parental expectations. Parents expected to collaborate with early childhood teachers regarding problems with their child at home, ensuring the best care for their child, and keeping their child happy while they are at work. (Author)
Descriptors: *Day Care; Educational Change; *Expectation; Foreign Countries; *Parent Attitudes;

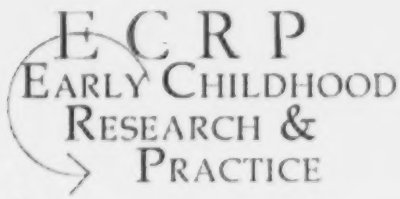
Parent Teacher Cooperation; Parents; *Preschool Education; Public Policy
Identifiers: Greece

EJ559919 PS527579
Lessons from Ukraine.
Seefeldt, Carol; Galper, Alice
Childhood Education, v74 n3 p136-42 Spr 1998
ISSN: 0009-4056
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); PROJECT DESCRIPTION (141)
Journal Announcement: CIJAUG98
Describes two American university professors' experience at a two-week workshop for preschool teachers in Ukraine. Discusses similarities between American and Ukrainian teachers, such as concern with children's health and academic welfare, their own creativity, and the worth of workshops, as well as differences, such as severe lack of material goods. Concludes with lessons to be learned from Ukraine. (EV)
Descriptors: Cultural Differences; Foreign Countries; Preschool Education; *Preschool Teachers; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Improvement; *Teacher Workshops
Identifiers: *Ukraine

EJ557331 PS527450
What Functions Do the Austrian Kindergarten Teachers Ascribe to the Kindergarten in the Present Socioeconomic Conditions?
Hartmann, Waltraut; Stoll, Martina
European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, v5 n2 p75-84 1997
ISSN: 1350-293X
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); RESEARCH REPORT (143)
Journal Announcement: CIJJUN98
Surveyed Austrian kindergarten teachers about their perceptions of the function of kindergarten in the context of current socioeconomic conditions. Found that teachers no longer see kindergarten as merely an education-providing institution: one-fourth considered kindergarten's main task to be substituting for family care; one-fifth claimed that kindergarten has neither educational nor care functions, which suggests high teacher frustration. (JPB)
Descriptors: Day Care; *Educational Objectives; Educational Research; Foreign Countries; *Kindergarten; Preschool Education; *Preschool Teachers; *Socioeconomic Influences; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Role
Identifiers: Austria

EJ557328 PS527447
The Interplay between Organisation and Pedagogic Content: Results from a Study Reflecting the Changes within 12 Preschools in Stockholm during a Three-Year Period.
Johansson, Inge
European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, v5 n2 p33-46 1997
ISSN: 1350-293X
Document Type: JOURNAL ARTICLE (080); RESEARCH REPORT (143)

Journal Announcement: CIJJUN98
Surveyed leaders, staff and parents over a three-year period to determine effect of organizational changes on pedagogical content in Swedish preschools. Found that changes in organizational frame and available resources raised the importance of official goals and caused the school's main function to be seen as providing service, elaborating cooperation with parents, and increasing the profile of pedagogical content. (JPB)
Descriptors: *Educational Change; *Educational Objectives; Educational Research; Foreign Countries; Influences; *Instruction; Longitudinal Studies; *Organizational Change; Parent School Relationship; Preschool Education; School Restructuring
Identifiers: Sweden



ECRP
EARLY CHILDHOOD RESEARCH & PRACTICE

Volume 1, Number 2

New at ERIC/EECE

Symposium in Honor of Lilian Katz

A symposium celebrating the distinguished career of Lilian G. Katz will be held on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign from Sunday, November 5, through Tuesday, November 7, 2000. As both professor of early childhood education at the University of Illinois and director of ERIC/EECE, Dr. Katz has contributed internationally to the field of early childhood education through her teaching, writing, and lecturing—especially in the areas of early childhood curriculum, teacher education, and the dissemination of information.

ERIC/EECE invites paper submissions for the symposium in the following areas: (1) early childhood curriculum design, (2) teacher education, and (3) the dissemination of education-related information. Abstracts are due by May 15, 2000; papers are due by July 15, 2000.

As plans develop, more information on the symposium will be available at http://ericeece.org/katzsymposium/.

Recent ERIC/EECE Digests

ERIC/EECE published the following Digests during 1999:

- *Parent-Teacher Conferences: Suggestions for Parents*
- *Helping Middle School Students Make the Transition to High School*
- *Easing the Teasing: How Parents Can Help Their Children*

- *Selecting Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Materials: Suggestions for Service Providers*
- *Another Look at What Young Children Should Be Learning*
- *Enriching Children's Out-of-School Time*
- *Parenting Style and Its Correlates*
- *Adopted Children in the Early Childhood Classroom*
- *Language and Literacy Environments in Preschools*

Digests are short reports on topics of current interest in education. They are designed to provide an overview of information on a given topic and references to items that provide more detailed information. All ERIC/EECE Digests are available free in original printed form directly from the clearinghouse. Digests are also available on the Internet at http://ericeece.org/pubs/digests.html. Paper copies can be ordered by phone (800-583-4135), email (ericeece@uiuc.edu), or on the Internet (http://ericeece.org/digorder.html).

What's New on ERIC/EECE's Web Sites

ECRP

Of course, this Fall 1999 issue (volume 1, number 2) is new on ERIC/EECE's Web sites! With this issue, for the first time, we are including video clips with an article ("Instant Video Revisiting: The Video Camera as a 'Tool of the Mind' for Young Children" by George Forman).

NCCIC

The National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC) serves as ERIC/EECE's adjunct clearinghouse on child care. The NCCIC Web site is maintained on ERIC/EECE's Web server. This past August, NCCIC offered on its Web site a live video feed of presentations from the Child Care Bureau's (part of the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) State Administrator's Meeting.

This meeting addressed various topics related to child care administration. There were two Webcasts. The morning session Webcast included welcoming remarks by Frank Fuentes and Olivia Golden of the U.S. DHHS and a presentation titled "Planning for Quality—Communities Coming Together for Children" by Pat Montoya of U.S. DHHS, Barbara Ferguson Kamara, of the DC Department of Human Services, and Wendy Salaam of DC Agenda.

The afternoon session Webcast consisted of a presentation titled "Building Quality—Embracing Collaboration" by Steven Golightly of U.S. DHHS, Jane Hayward of the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, and Judy Victor of the Day Care Justice Co-Op in Providence, Rhode Island.

Each of these Webcasts has been archived and can still be viewed from the NCCIC Web site. Go to the "Webcast of keynote speeches" page on the NCCIC Web site to view the Webcasts. You can choose to access the video at a 28K modem speed or a 56K (or higher) modem speed. Simply click on the

appropriate link. To view these videos, you will need to have the Real Player plug-in for your Web browser. This free player is available from the Real Networks Web site.

ResilienceNet

ResilienceNet is a project of ERIC/EECE and ASSIST INTERNATIONAL, INC. This Web site provides information and resources to help children and families overcome adversities. This project received start-up funding from the Bernard van Leer Foundation in the Netherlands. More than any other of the Web sites on the ERIC/EECE server, this Web site has an international focus.

Over the past several months, links have been made on the ResilienceNet "Research Institutions and Innovative Projects" page to a number of Web sites in Brazil, Chile, and Peru. These Web sites are maintained by projects that address various aspects of children's and families' resilience in communities in those South American countries. The sites are presented predominantly in Spanish and Portuguese. Some text is in English, and, interestingly and excitingly, some text is in Quechua, the language of one of the indigenous peoples in Peru. ERIC/EECE is happy to be part of this international effort.

CLAS

ERIC/EECE works closely with the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Early Childhood Research Institute. The CLAS Web site is maintained on the ERIC/EECE Web server, and CLAS staff and ERIC/EECE are neighbors—as we share opposite ends of the same building on the University of Illinois campus!

CLAS has collected resources related to cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education, with a stress on special education, and provided reviews (and in some cases, full texts) of these resources available on its Web site. As this collection grew over the past two years, finding resources became more difficult. To address this problem, CLAS has added a new search feature to the Resources section of the Web site, by means of which Web visitors can more easily find what they're looking for. Users can search by preselected subject, keyword, age range, language, format, author, title, and organization/publisher.

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